



WONDER WOMAN GAL GADOT EXCLUSIVE

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STAR WARS

ROGUE ONE

Everything you need to know about the saga's bold next step

• Jyn Erso: secret origin? • All the Easter Eggs you missed • The new Tarkin revealed

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**MUTANT
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Bryan Singer & the new X-Men
on Apocalypse and beyond



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AMERICAN WEREWOLF // DOCTOR STRANGE // ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS
TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE // WEIRD FICTION // FANTASTIC BEASTS // CLEVERMAN



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ISSUE 119

OPTIMUS

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...PLAY



HUMPASAURUS COSPLAY
TASCHA DEARING ART



A confession: while we're massive *Star Wars* fans here at SciFiNow, we will admit to being slightly sceptical when the prospect of spin-off films was first announced.

Call us old-fashioned, but we'd always held a certain affection for the episodic nature of the saga. Whether you started from the beginning or entered the series halfway through, you always knew where you were, confident that you were part of a bigger picture.

Then *Rogue One* was announced. We clapped politely, before checking our calendars to see how long it was before *The Force Awakens* hit cinemas. Then Gareth Edwards was confirmed as director, which made us perk up a bit. *Monsters* and *Godzilla* were both great, after all.

And then the casting: Felicity Jones, Diego Luna, Riz Ahmed, Donnie Yen, Mads Mikkelsen, Forest Whitaker, Alan Tudyk – the list goes on. Clearly Disney knew what they were doing.

Then the trailer hit. Atmospheric, universe-shaking and spellbinding, it was something entirely different, and yet still recognisably *Star Wars*. Okay, we were converted long ago, but this sealed the deal.

Inside this very issue, we look beyond this first glimpse and explore the ramifications *Rogue One* will have for the *Star Wars* universe, bringing you everything we know in the process.

But that's not the half of it. Also inside, we examine *Wonder Woman's* evolution into a pop-culture icon and look ahead to her future, sitting down with influential writers like Gail Simone and Yanick Paquette, and Gal Gadot herself.

Furthermore, the cast and crew of AMC's *Preacher* go behind the scenes on the most shocking comic adap yet; we report back from the set of big-budget blockbuster *Warcraft*, and the brilliant James Bobin reveals all on *Alice*

Through The Looking Glass.

Embrace your inner rebel, and enjoy the issue!

Steve

Steve Wright
Editor

GET EXCITED ABOUT THE BFG

There's every chance that *The BFG* holds a place in your hearts. Whether it's through Roald Dahl's timeless story or Brian Cosgrove's classic animation with David Jason in the title role, every version of the tale has been an event, and with Steven Spielberg at the helm of this latest take, we strongly suspect this will be no different. This time, Mark Rylance is personifying the titular tall man, and with the recent trailer proving to be every big as magical and marvellous as we were hoping for, we're sure everyone will have a whizzpoppin' good time.

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Hook scribe Jim V Hart reflects on his career, the *Super Mario Bros* director looks back, and *Psycho* gets the ultimate quiz.





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20 ROGUE ONE

ALL THE FACTS, RUMOURS AND FAN-FICTION



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MEET THE TEAM

Q. Which actor are you most looking forward to seeing in *Rogue One*?



James Hoare
Editor in Chief

A. Ben Mendelsohn
Fingers crossed they blue his face in post-production.



Steve Wright
Editor

A. Genevieve O'Reilly
Mon Mothma's finally getting her due. Now for the Bothans...



Jonathan Hatfull
Features Editor

A. Mads Mikkelsen
I'll watch him in anything, so it being *Star Wars* is a bonus.



Poppy-Jay Palmer
Senior Staff Writer

A. Riz Ahmed
I just love his adorable face. Plus *Star Wars* needs a computer hacker.



Jon Wells
Art Editor

A. Forest Whitaker
Forest Whitaker in space. Anything else is a bonus.



Jen Neal
Production Editor

A. Alan Tudyk
Alan Tudyk as a droid? Yes! Alan Tudyk doing anything really.

EVERY ISSUE

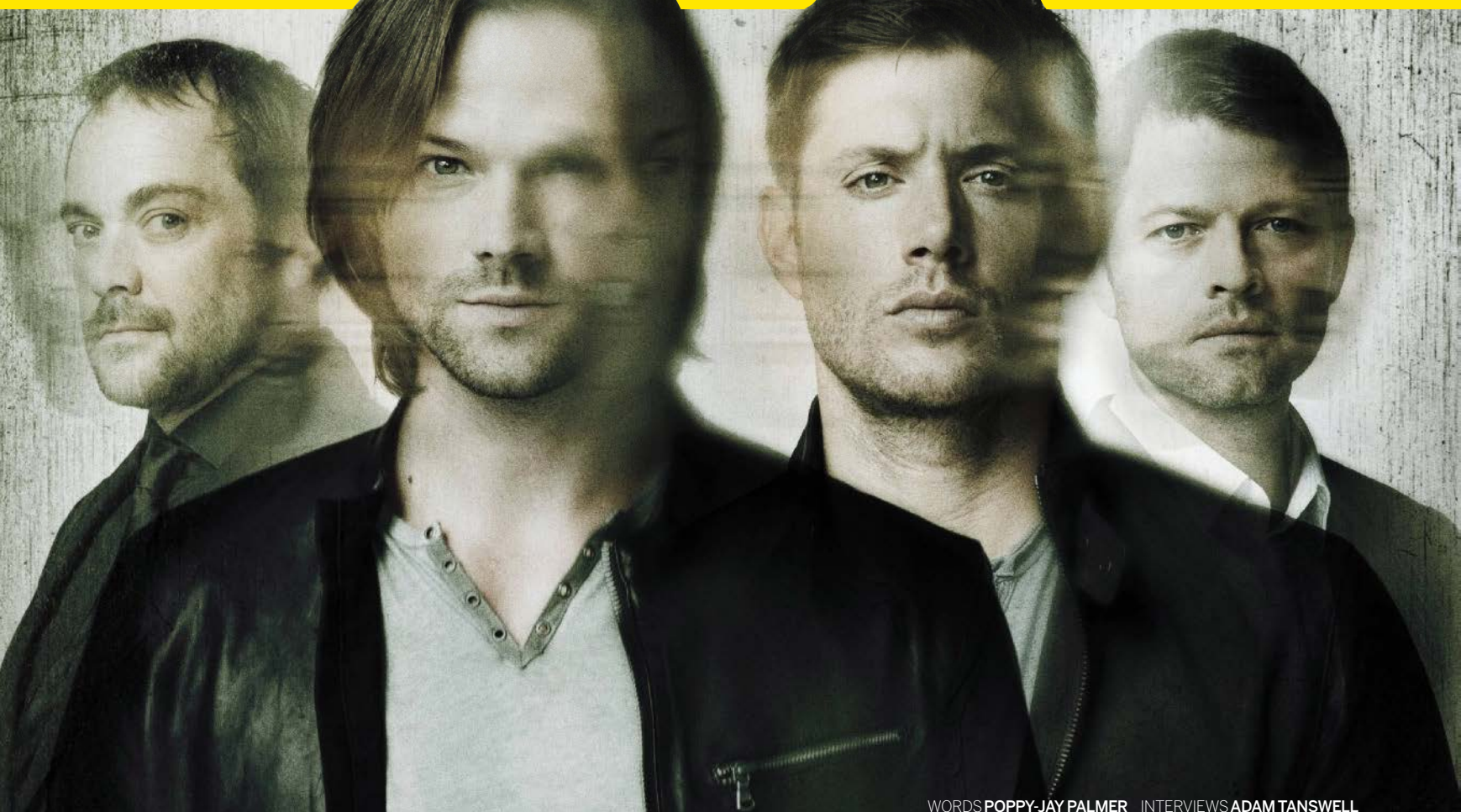
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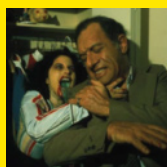
Your essential, trustworthy
and unrivalled guide to the
latest genre happenings



WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER INTERVIEWS ADAM TANSWELL

**Supernatural's Jared Padalecki
and executive producers Jeremy
Carver and Andrew Dabb talk
Season 11 and beyond...**

CARRY ON, MY WAYWARD BROS



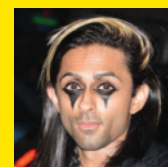
The Soska Sisters on remaking the David Cronenberg cult classic



How Jakku was nearly a water planet and other Episode VII secrets



Iain Glen reveals all on the exciting new Australian drama



The bootleg movie maestro talks about his directorial debut

Sam and Dean Winchester have had their fair share of personal problems; they've both been tortured and killed more than a few times, after all. But what's coming for them in *Supernatural's* latest season might just be their darkest dilemma yet. Season 11 will pick up immediately where Season Ten left off: with the unleashed Darkness washing over the world, and the brothers desperately trying to escape it.

"[The idea for Darkness] began at the end of last season – what if we started looking at this great unknown?" says executive producer Jeremy Carver. "Everyone considered that Earth came out of nothing, but what if it was something? That something is obviously the Darkness. The boys – and frankly not just the boys, but angels and demons as well – are going to realise that with the return of the Darkness, they are stepping into a matter of great unfinished business that is going to be a very big threat."

And just where are Sam and Dean in all this? "The boys are going to be right in the middle... I always like it when the boys do something and hold themselves accountable. That means a return to, 'We're not going to ignore things. We need to go back to the very, very basics. It's not just hunting things; it's saving people.' There were times in the old days where they cut corners with, as it were. You are going to see them trying very hard not to do that. Frankly, that's a lot easier said than done."

Typically, *Supernatural* has based a lot of its storylines around the Bible. But that isn't the case for Season 11. "[This season] is fresh for the show in that we're making up a lot from scratch. We're in uncharted waters where we're saying that before all



You can finally catch the 11th season of *Supernatural* in the UK on E4.

that, there was something. Death teased it by saying there was a battle between God, the archangels and the Darkness. As we begin to meet the Darkness, we see there's a lot of unfinished business from that clash, however many zillions of years ago that was. This big bad is going to be unlike anything we've seen on the show before, and we're all pretty excited about that."

Long gone are the days of monster-of-the-week episodes, battling wendigos and scarecrows, Season 11 is all about the big event. Executive producer Andrew Dabb tells us it is beyond anything they brothers have experienced. "It has ripple effects that can touch monsters and heaven and hell and demons and witches. Certain people or certain factions that we've considered to be bad guys in the past are going to come back to help us in ways that will be very surprising." He comments that it brings another layer of satisfaction to the show, "It's always fun to see the bad guys work with the Winchesters, even if it's only temporary, even if it's with a major negative agenda."

It's not all doom and gloom though. No season of *Supernatural* would be complete without a few highly stylised episodes. With every single shot of the episode featuring Dean's beloved Impala, 'Baby' is just that. "We're either in the Impala or out of the Impala," says star Jared Padalecki. "We're so blessed with a fandom, and with very inventive writers so we can do all these sort of crazy, strange things. We're able to really embrace our number three on the call sheet, the '67 Impala. I'm thrilled."

Padalecki also promises that there's heaps of signature brotherly love to look forward to: "That's big for me," he says. "I am a brother, and Jensen is a brother, but he also feels like my brother in real life. One of the things that I really meshed with was this idea of these two brothers are fighting through all the bad stuff in life with somebody by their side. It's important to have something to help you get through the day. That something for Sam was Dean and that something for Dean was Sam, but then they split apart for so long."

So what's next? What kinds of themes would the crew like to tackle in Season 12? "We've talked about the Kraken so much, so why haven't we seen it?" says Dabb. "The themes tend to be very simple, but also very universal. It's a bit about family, because it's about saving your brother, and is also about saving the world. It sounds very simple in one or two lines, but it can also be very deep and take you down a lot of different paths. It's not so much the themes that change, but the explorations of the themes change."

Supernatural Season 11 is currently airing on Wednesday nights on E4.



Dean and Sam will return for *Supernatural* Season 12.

No one puts baby in a corner

The Impala's greatest hits

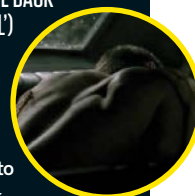
THE KNIGHT RIDER THING ('CHANGING CHANNELS')

The episode was bonkers, but it got weirder when Sam's voice was sucked into the car, à la *Knight Rider*.



DEAN AND ANNA USE THE BACK SEAT ('HEAVEN AND HELL')

Dean helped Anna make her last night on Earth memorable with a touching love-making sequence set to a soft rock soundtrack.



THE IMPALA GETS TOTALLED ('DEVIL'S TRAP')

Baby getting ruined wasn't as dramatic as Dean being comatose because of it, but we were still traumatised.



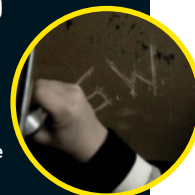
DEAN HELPS HIS DAD PICK THE IMPALA ('THE SONG REMAINS THE SAME')

Even with all the other family drama, our favourite moment was modern-day Dean suggesting that 1978 John Winchester buys his future baby.



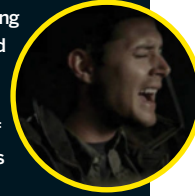
THE IMPALA HELPS SAM OVERPOWER LUCIFER ('SWAN SONG')

When Sam managed to overpower Lucifer by recalling his childhood travelling in the Impala, we were absolute wrecks.



SAM AND DEAN SING BON JOVI ('NO REST FOR THE WICKED')

The Winchesters belting out Bon Jovi's 'Wanted Dead Or Alive' while they drive to Dean's death might be one of the greatest moments on the show, ever.



REMAKING RABID

The Soska Sisters spill as much as they can about their remake of David Cronenberg's body horror curio... WORDS OLIVER PFEIFFER

SciFiNow: What attracted you to David Cronenberg's *Rabid*, and why do you feel now, 40 years later, it is ripe for a remake?

Sylvia Soska: Jen and I love Cronenberg's work. His films stand out and have shaped so many artists with the bravery of his expression. The themes of extreme violence and women being preyed upon seems to be ripped from today's headlines, yet this was a conversation Cronenberg was having with his audience almost 40 years ago. There is a lot of room for further analysis on those topics.

Jen Soska: It's like Cronenberg foretold the future in that film, which is very fascinating to me. The themes touched on are even more front-and-centre in today's world. The casual nature of plastic surgery is laughed off in the original in a day and age where it was far from being the norm, but now getting a new nose 'cause "daddy didn't like the last one" is an everyday occurrence! There's a lot of room there to explore those issues in today's world, which is very exciting.

***Rabid* was a female-fronted horror film. Is this partially what attracted you both given your strong titular lead in *American Mary*?**

SS: Jen and I enjoy not only writing strong female characters, but real human characters regardless of gender. There is a complication in a woman who undergoes an unconventional surgery and finds herself quite different like the original *Rabid*'s Rose. I would like to get to know

her better in this story [and] I'm excited for people to see her again.

JS: For me, it's always about the stories we're telling. I love the journey a character goes on, and transformation is always a big theme in our films.

That's what attracted me most to this particular story. While a film centring around a female character is something I enjoy and think we need to see a lot more of, it's not solely what we look for in a new project.

Can you tease some of the surprises you will bring to your version of *Rabid*? Is there anything you want to improve on from the low-budget original?

SS: All I can say is that there will be rabies! We are very active online, so we will be sharing little pieces as the project continues on.

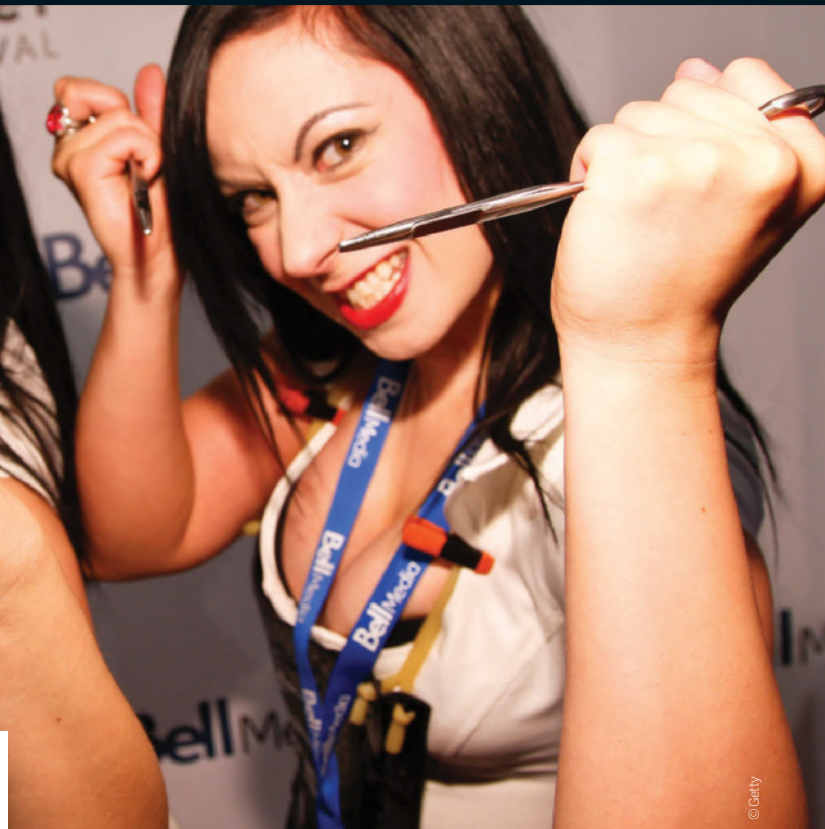
JS: I have to be vague, I'm so sorry. It's going to be everything the fans are hoping for because we're fans ourselves. Do follow us online. We like to drop hints and make big announcements when we can.

There are rumours of a subsequent TV series. What can you tell us about your plans for this?

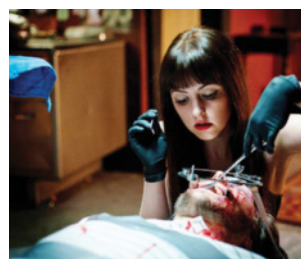
SS: I can just tell you that it will be very awesome. There's a world being created and it's a bloody good time.

JS: The film will be setting up the world. There's a lot going into the film that'll come to play in a big way in the series.

Rabid will be released in 2017.



The Sosas take on *Rabid* having helmed *American Mary* (middle) and *Dead Hooker in A Trunk* (bottom).



X MARKS THE SPOT

Other female directors to look out for



JENNIFER KENT

Having directed the brilliant Australian horror *The Babadook*, Kent has a bright future ahead of her.



ROXANNE BENJAMIN

Previously a producer on the V/H/S films, she recently made her directing debut in solid anthology *Southbound*.



SARAH ADINA SMITH

A genre newcomer, her debut chiller *The Midnight Swim* impressed us greatly. She will be seen next directing a segment of horror anthology *Holiday*.



A Batman solo movie is officially a-go. We're excited to see what Ben Affleck's Bruce Wayne is like when he's not buried under the hot mess that is *Dawn Of Justice*.

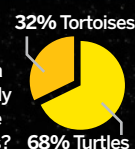
With Oscar Isaac, Gina Rodriguez, Natalie Portman and Jennifer Jason Leigh involved, the cast of *Annihilation* is looking amazing.

5

The number of months we have to wait to see how *The Walking Dead*'s Season 6 cliffhanger is resolved



Are the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles actually turtles or are they tortoises?





Star Wars: Han Solo will reveal a new side to the old nerf-herder.

HAN GOES SOLO

The lovable rogue is starring in his own Marvel miniseries WORDS CHRIS ANDERSON

June is set to be a big month for Han Solo fans. There is a chance to relive his emotional arc in *The Force Awakens*, with Marvel releasing the first issue of its long-awaited comic-book adaptation, and a five-issue miniseries revealing an untold tale of his past will also go on sale.

Star Wars: Han Solo will take place between *A New Hope* and *The Empire Strikes Back*, written by Marjorie Liu, with art from Mark Brooks and covers by Lee Bermejo.

Liu sees this as an interesting period for the character, having just helped destroy the Death Star, but not yet embracing his hero status and still drawn to his old ways. It creates the perfect dilemma when he is given a mission by Princess Leia that involves him taking part in the Dragon Void Run – a dangerous race across the stars that he has always dreamt of winning. Chewbacca and the Millennium

Falcon will be there to help him, but will the former smuggler keep his mind on the job or can he win the race as well?

"I started thinking about this old movie from the Eighties that I really enjoyed, which is *Cannonball Run*," Liu told *Entertainment Weekly*. "I thought, 'Okay, what if this is sort of like Han Solo in *Cannonball Run* in space?'"

The situation brings Han into conflict with Leia, and Liu describes writing their interactions as, "a bit of a dream come true." She also reveals that seeing *The Force Awakens* and knowing how their relationship plays out may influence the story. "That's been sort of an internal conversation with myself, whether I can change certain beats, whether I do certain things to reflect this now-future canon that I know is coming down the line for him," she says.

Star Wars: Han Solo goes on sale in June.



SCOOBY-DOO, IS THAT YOU?

WORDS CHRIS ANDERSON

Classic Hanna-Barbera characters are getting a makeover from DC Comics

Before it resets its entire superhero universe in June, DC Comics is preparing to reboot an entirely different set of characters. Classic animated TV shows from Hanna-Barbera, such as *Scooby-Doo*, *The Flintstones* and *Wacky Races*, are among those getting the makeover treatment, reimagining each with contemporary values and themes.

It kicks off with *Future Quest*, a crossover series that sees *Jonny Quest* and *Space Ghost* team up to fight an intergalactic threat. Jeff Parker is on writing duty, with art provided by Evan 'Doc' Shaner.

Scooby Apocalypse mixes *Scooby-Doo* with the imagination of DC artist and co-publisher Jim Lee. Fred, Velma, Daphne, Shaggy and Scooby will face an 'apocalyptic near-future badland'

infected by a nanite virus and full of mutated creatures. Scooby Snacks and the Mystery Machine are joined by gadgets, guns, emojis, tattoos and a hipster beard. Lee is co-writing with Keith Giffen, with Howard Porter on art.

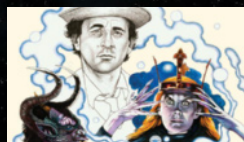
Wacky Raceland sees *Wacky Races* handed over to *Mad Max: Fury Road* concept artist Mark Sexton, while the book itself will be handled by writer Ken Pontac and artist Leonardo Manco.

Last but not least is *The Flintstones*, with writer Mark Russell keeping the name of the TV show, as well as Fred, Barney and co. There's no artist yet, but the characters have been given a less cartoonish redesign by Harley Quinn regular Amanda Conner.

Future Quest goes on sale 18 May.



Garth Ennis and Darick Robertson's comic *The Boys* is getting its own TV series. Seth Rogen, Evan Goldberg and Eric Kripke are reportedly already working on it.



The number of *Doctor Who* novels that have been reissued with new covers by BBC Books.

Warner Bros made a very strange move with *Suicide Squad* when it announced it was doing last-minute reshoots following *Batman V Superman's* release.



7

"JAKKU WAS NEARLY A WATER PLANET"

And other revelations from
Doug Chiang, art editor on
The Force Awakens

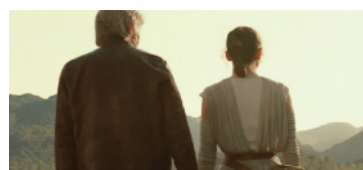
WORDS STEVE WRIGHT



The Art of Star Wars: The Force Awakens by Phil Szostak is available to buy now, published by Abrams Books.

1 The Force Awakens was going to channel Waterworld

If the original plans had been followed, the opening scenes of *The Force Awakens* would have looked very different. "Early on, we said, 'What kind of ecosystem can we explore that will be new and fresh?'" says art director Doug Chiang. "We already had sand and snow, so we thought, 'Okay, what about a water planet?' and then we thought, 'Maybe there was a space battle.' So that started a whole chain of exploration where we were trying to come up with visually creative imagery... I like the idea of Star Destroyers in unfamiliar but familiar environments."

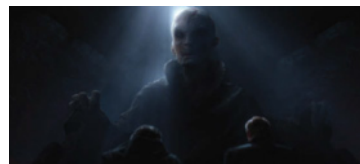


2 Gareth Edwards and Rian Johnson will break the mould

"Visionary directors like JJ [Abrams] and Gareth [Edwards] bring in their own point of view, and that keeps me on my toes," says Chiang. "JJ's take is different from Gareth's and Rian Johnson's, so you're making the universe feel more alive, real and comprehensive."

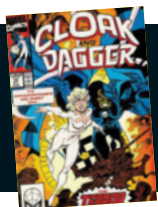
3 Snoke was based on an old Ralph McQuarrie design

Supreme Leader Snoke's origins go further back than you might think. "In *The Empire Strikes Back*, there was a sketch Ralph McQuarrie did of Vader talking to a hologram of the Emperor," says Chiang, "the imagery was just a giant pair of lips... it was still very powerful, and we wanted to update it."



4 JJ Abrams didn't completely abandon the prequels

Much of the talk about *The Force Awakens* has centred around how similar it is to *A New Hope* – and how far removed it is from the prequel trilogy. However, this didn't extend to the personnel. Chiang jumped at the chance to become art editor on Episode VII. "I worked with George [Lucas] back in 1995 through about 2002, and I never thought I'd have the opportunity to work on *Star Wars* again. So when I read the press release, I contacted my friend and mentor, Rick Carter, who called Kathy [Kennedy]... from there it kept going and going."



Marvel really keeps pushing the boat out with its TV projects. The latest addition is a new series based on the super-powered duo Cloak and Dagger.

Good news, *Death Note* fans: Netflix has stepped in to pick up Adam Wingard's live-action film based on the Japanese manga and anime series.

4

The number of cast members currently on board for *Blade Runner 2* (Ryan Gosling, Harrison Ford, Robin Wright and Dave Bautista)

15

The number of years that have passed since the first *The Tick* TV series



“I LIKE THE
IDEA OF STAR
DESTROYERS
IN UNFAMILIAR
BUT FAMILIAR
ENVIRONMENTS”
DOUG CHIANG

THE CLEVER ONES

Game Of Thrones star Iain Glen on heading Down Under for Indigenous Australian drama **Cleverman** WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

In what appears to be a perfect reversal of the notion of life imitating art, *Cleverman* looks scarily relevant in today's political climate. Taking place in a world where half-human 'Hairypeople' are segregated in a ghetto from the human populace, the parallels it shares with the current refugee crisis in Europe and the ongoing debates around it are uncanny, to say the least.

"The ruling party are taking very hard-nosed steps against the hairy people; against the outside people," says Iain Glen (Ser Jorah Mormont in *Game Of Thrones*). "They've ghettoed them, and they are not being allowed to mix with urban Australian society."

Glen is playing media mogul Jared Slade, a figure he describes as being like Richard Branson, although beneath his benevolent exterior is a more sinister side. "My character when we first meet him is trying to use his knowledge of sciences and enormous wealth to find a solution – to take the heat out of the situation – and his wife is running a medical centre for free inside the ghettoed area to try and help the people there... The only difference between Branson is that he doesn't have the side that emerges to the character I play, but he's a very visible... he's a man of the people, and that's what he presents."

Cleverman has already garnered widespread acclaim, with a second season confirmed and an appearance at the Berlinale Film Festival opening it up to a wider audience (Glen describes it as being, "utterly cinematic in its feel"). Creator Ryan Griffen spoke of his desire in an interview with *The Guardian* to create, "a superhero my own son could connect to while learning about his Indigenous culture," a goal he seems to be dedicated to achieving, with the show drawing heavily from Aboriginal mythology and

the cast itself encompassing an 80 per cent Australian cast (including stars Hunter Page-Lochard and Rob Collins, who play brothers Koen and Waruu West) in addition to the likes of Glen and Frances O'Connor (*AI*).

Glen can't speak highly enough of the crew behind it. "I thought it was an amazing team throughout: the origination of the story and Ryan's ideas and his knowledge of it was very liberating, but there was also Wayne Blair, who's a brilliant director. When I

was doing it I felt like there was nothing like it that I had been a part of. It's a very unusual and powerful drama. It's character-led without a doubt, it's all about families and trying to survive. It's horribly relevant in places, but it's where it needs to be. I don't think it'll depress you; it'll inform you, entertain you and surprise you."

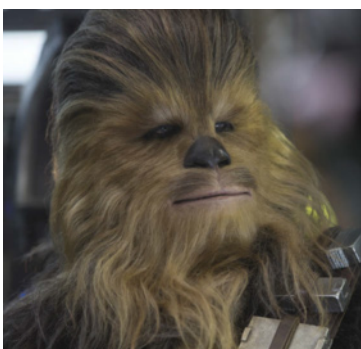
Cleverman will air on SundanceTV in the US on 1 June, with a UK air date to follow.



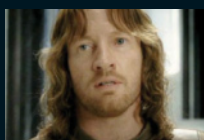
Iain Glen stars alongside Hunter Page-Lochard and Rob Collins.



A lot of parallels can be drawn with *Cleverman* and the world today.



Star Wars: The Force Awakens is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now.



The Lord Of The Rings star David Wenham has joined the cast of Marvel's *Iron Fist* as villain Harold Meachum, alongside Finn Jones and Jessica Fenwick.

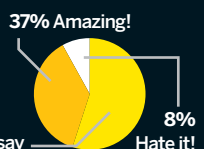


7.17 Million

The number of US viewers who watched the *Supergirl*/*The Flash* crossover episode



What do you think of Jared Leto's Joker so far?
55% Hard to say



EXPELLIARMUS!

Things get more magical in the latest **Fantastic Beasts** trailer WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER



Since the first, extremely vague teaser for *Fantastic Beasts And Where To Find Them* a couple of months ago, we've been gasping for another look. The latest trailer has thankfully given us a lot more...



1 New York, New York
We already knew the setting (New York, 1920s) but just look at that landscape! Honestly, we're already wetting ourselves in anticipation.



2 Monster bag of monsters
Newt Scamander is obviously a fool for thinking he could just fill a suitcase with magical creatures and take it on an adventure.



3 Everyone loves a bad boy
"Kicked out of Hogwarts for endangering human life with a beast." We knew he was a Hufflepuff, but we had no idea he was such a *rebel*.



4 Albus Dumbledore
The trailer goes and name-drops one of the biggest papas of the Wizarding World. Can we expect more of this sort of thing?



5 Muggle worthy
No food, weapons, liquids or MASSIVE CREATURE COLLECTIONS. We can't get enough of these ingenious anti-muggle contraptions.



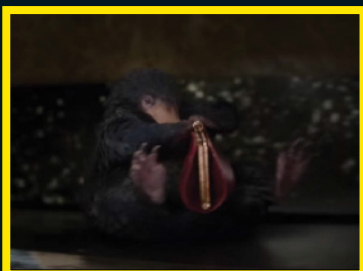
6 Wizarding White House
Could this be the US's equivalent of the Ministry for Magic? The giant moving portrait on the wall suggests that yes, yes it is.



7 Pre-Voldemort?
Who is this Shaw fella? He looks important. Maybe he's the main antagonist. Our galleons are on either Shaw or Colin Farrell.



8 No-maj alert! (We think)
Dan Fogler's Jacob Kowalski constantly looks baffled, so perhaps he's not a wizard. Calling it now: he's a muggle or a squib.



9 It's a niffler!
It's a niffler, you guys! An actual niffler! We've been desperate for a movie version of these little guys since the *Goblet Of Fire* book.



10 Women power!
It's the witch from six – aka probably the President for Magic – Seraphina Picquery, played by Carmen Ejogo in an amazing power suit.



11 Come with me, and you'll be... ...in a world of pure imagination! Only a wizard would remedy restlessness by venturing into a seemingly bottomless suitcase.



12 Who, me?
We have a funny feeling that Jacob will end up becoming the breakout star. Bless your tiny cotton socks, Jacob. Bless them both.

While we wait to see whether Michael Keaton joins *Spider-Man: Homecoming*, Laura Harrier and *The Grand Budapest Hotel*'s Tony Revolori have been added to the cast.

What did you think of the *Doctor Strange* trailer?



64% Brilliant!



36% Meh, seen better.



269K

The number of comments on the *Ghostbusters* trailer



Narcos' Boyd Holbrook is becoming the villain for the third instalment in *Wolverine*'s collection of spin-off movies, but light is yet to be shed on who he's playing.

ALIEN ENCOUNTER

Harry Potter star Matthew Lewis talks about his latest project, audio production *Alien: Out Of The Shadows*... WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

SciFiNow: How did you get involved with *Alien: Out Of The Shadows*?

Matthew Lewis: I've never done anything like this before, and I wasn't really aware of the medium at all, to be totally honest with you! Then my voiceover agent sent me the script and said, "Would you be interested in doing this audio drama?" and sort of explained what the concept was... and I just thought it was such a great idea. I was like, "Why is no one doing this kind of thing?" And then I read the script, and realised that it was *Alien* – it was set in between the first two movies – and I was like, "Oh yes. I'm sold. I want to do that."

Were you already an *Alien* fan before this?

Yes. That is part and parcel of what attracted me to this. I mean, just to say that I am a part of the *Alien* canon is pretty exciting. The first two movies are two of my favourite films. The first one is just a masterpiece. So just to be in the studio yesterday, talking to Ellen Ripley [played by the voice of Mother in the *Alien Vs Predator* video game, Laurel Lefkow] and going, 'Hey, Ripley!' That was just the coolest thing.

How did you find the experience of recording the story?

It was really good fun. I read the whole script thinking, "He's going to be an American," and then I was told, "No, no, no, it's fine, do your own voice!" But then I got there, and the director [Dirk Maggs] said, "No! He is American!" It was a bit of a last-minute change.

Would you want to do more audio productions now?

Yeah! I think there's a real future in this format. Nowadays, everyone is on the move. Everyone has smartphones or iPads or whatever, and the fact that you can just download this and listen to it – you can be doing other stuff at the same time

if you wanted to! I think this script is so engaging, gripping and well-written that I don't think you'll want to do anything else. You'll literally sit in silence and listen to it.

If you were forced to choose, what would be your favourite *Alien* film?

Ooh, you see, now it's tricky, because as an actual movie I think the first film is a masterpiece. In terms of horror and in terms of tension it's just so, so well done, and set the bar for so many science fiction movies thereafter. However, in terms of just sheer buckle-up roller coaster fun, *Aliens* is just... I mean, c'mon. When you're watching the first *Alien* film, the only thing you're thinking towards the end is just, "How good would it be if we took a load of colonial marines with pulse rifles and stuck them in the middle of this?"

What makes *Alien* so iconic?

There's something brilliantly dystopian about it. It's that future with the dirty mining ships, the grime of it all, it all just felt so embedded in reality. You could easily see a future where humans are miners doing that same dirty job. It's Average Joes just getting screwed over by the Man, by the company.

The idea of the unknown is exciting; dropping down to a planet and finding something fascinating and otherworldly. I love the idea in the first one. There's no back story. There's no explanation as to how they got on the planet, what the eggs are; it's just there. It's something that I think sci-fi does very well. In that situation, you wouldn't have all the information. You wouldn't have some marine there that just goes, "Just so you know, here's the whole back story for the alien." That just doesn't happen.

Alien: Out Of The Shadows, an Audible Original audio drama, is available from 26 April, free with a 30-day trial at www.audible.co.uk/scream.

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Catching up with the Gryffindor boys' dorm



DANIEL RADCLIFFE
(HARRY POTTER)

He's been a bit busy...

ALFRED ENOCH
(DEAN THOMAS)

After taking to the stage in *Shakespeare*, Enoch has also garnered a regular role in *How To Get Away With Murder*.

MATTHEW LEWIS
(NEVILLE LOGBOTTOM)

Now a shirtless mag favourite, Lewis has garnered roles in solid TV dramas like *Happy Valley* and *Ripper Street*.

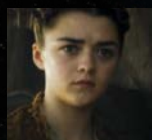
RUPERT GRINT
(RON WEASLEY)

He's been plugging away with film roles, and will next be seen with Ron Perlman in *Moonwalkers*.

DEVON MURRAY
(SEAMUS FINNIGAN)

Aside from *Vlogbrothers*, Murray has mainly passed his time on the convention circuit.

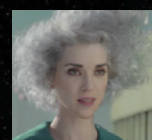
X-Men's New Mutants spin-off film has reportedly already found itself some cast members, including *Game Of Thrones'* Maisie Williams and *The Witch's* Anya Taylor-Joy.



British actor and comedian Peter Serafinowicz will be taking over from Patrick Warburton to headline the new *Tick* TV pilot.

6

The number of directors working on all-female horror anthology *XX*. Among them is musician St Vincent in her directorial debut.



It's been seven years, but James Cameron is still threatening to make more *Avatar* sequels. At the last count, four are in the pipeline. That's right: *four*.

FIVE THINGS WITH ADI SHANKAR

Hollywood's superhero movie rebel discusses his debut feature

WORDS DREW TURNERY

1 From bootleg to Disney

Despite thumbing his nose at corporate Hollywood and its lawyers – thanks to his *Judge Dredd: Superfiend* and *Power/Rangers* bootleg short, which resulted in a legal spat with *Power Rangers* owners Saban Films – Shankar now works with Disney due to a deal with Disney-owned Maker Studios that will see him direct three digital projects. While he's happy to talk about anything else, he apologetically says, "Disney PR actually asked me not to talk about it," when asked about the deal.

2 Gods And Secrets

He's currently shooting his debut feature, *Gods And Secrets*, described online as exploring 'the darker ramifications of a world filled with superheroes – for the people they protect and the famous heroes themselves.' "It's a dark superhero story where I'm messing with these archetypes we know," is how he describes it. "It's like a mash-up of a giant sweeping story and an intimate arthouse film told through the lens of superheroism."

3 Inspired by the best

"My work tends to skew a little darker anyway," he says. "This is a basically a superhero movie for *Dredd* fans." *Gods And Secrets* will be like his signature bootleg projects, but with a lot of dark comedy. Shankar describes the tone and style as being like an amalgamation of Paul Verhoeven, John Carpenter and Tim Burton. "I'm comparing myself to three legends, so I sound immediately douchey," he adds, "but it's that."

4 Comparisons with Watchmen

The chatter about comparisons to Alan Moore's classic has been swift, and Shankar understands it on a surface level. "Subversive comic books have been a thing for a very long time in terms of flipping a genre on its head," he says. "*The Dark Knight Returns* had a way bigger impact on the legacy of superheroes and comic books as a medium in general." But it's surprising to hear he's not a fan of another of Moore's most beloved works, "I actually thought *Watchmen* kind of sucked as a comic. I feel like there's a lot of 'emperor's new clothes' going on there."

5 Superhero Fatigue?

To the untrained observer, it might seem like Hollywood is long past scraping the bottom of the barrel for new superhero ideas, but Shankar disagrees, saying our problem is with one specific type of story that just happens to be found in a lot of superhero movies. "The idea of a superhero movie has been going on since the birth of cinema," he says. "Stallone and Schwarzenegger were basically playing superheroes; they just didn't have capes and costumes, but they actually did have costumes. It's literally just taking a character and giving them some sort of insignia, iconic car or outfit."

Gods And Secrets will be released later this year.



BEST OF THE BILLBOARDS

Celebrating the best, worst and weirdest movie posters out there

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL



TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES: OUT OF THE SHADOWS

It takes quite a bit to get us excited about the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* sequel after the last film so underwhelmed us, but this gorgeous illustrated poster has done it. Recalling the spirit of the comics, this is energetic, colourful and gritty like the films obviously wanted to be. Sold.



CRIMINAL

Given that the star-studded *Criminal* is sneaking out without a whisper, it's kind of a surprise to see this not-bad art poster, which is working very hard to make it look fun.



GREEN ROOM

We love Jeremy Saulnier's *Green Room*; we really do, so it must try harder when it comes to its posters. For starters, the proportions of Imogen Poots' head to her body is all wrong, and frankly it looks a bit... cheap. It's a poor effort, but we do like the use of hot pink.



TALE OF TALES

Salma Hayek eating the heart of some kind of creature is a genius enough concept to be put on the poster, so we're fully behind this.



LIGHTS OUT

This high-concept horror is all about its premise (don't turn out the light), so we love the raw simplicity of this poster. It speaks volumes.



MEMORY BANK

Welcome to the Memory Bank, where we take the opportunity to travel back through time to remember what we were getting excited about back in the day, and to see whether we were on the right side of history.

Issue 26, which hit the shelves back in March 2009, is definitely a case of you win some, you lose some. Our cover sported the mighty Hugh Jackman doing his best Wolverine smoulder, but unfortunately he was smouldering in the service of *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*. "Please rest assured that Wolverine will be badass and hopefully meet all your expectations," he said. Hmm. Never mind, Hugh. You can't win every battle, and your three-word cameo in *X-Men: First Class* basically made up for it. It's still aged better than *Lesbian Vampire Killers* and that *Dragonball Z* film, also featured within these pages.

On the plus side, we went behind the scenes on *Fringe*, which was just overcoming its early wobbles to really find form during its first season. "I trust the people that are making my show to make these things pay off," Joshua Jackson told us. Ah, past Josh, you have no idea. Just wait until Season Two, when it really does get good.

Other highlights included a chat with the legendary Bruce Campbell about *My Name Is Bruce* (filmed on his own property, apparently), talking about the relief of Laura Roslin not being one of the Final Five with the glorious Mary McDonnell, and Joss Whedon admitting that *Dollhouse* is "The hardest concept to execute that I've ever pitched." It's fine, Joss, you'll have *Avengers: Age Of Ultron* to worry about in a few years.

6 THINGS WE KNOW ABOUT DOCTOR STRANGE

Jump into the cosmos for Marvel's trippiest film yet

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

IT'LL BE TRIPPIER THAN THE TRAILER

The first look treated us to a couple of fancy kaleidoscope-style effects, but the visuals in the actual movie are sure to be fancier still. Filming only wrapped ten days before the trailer aired, and these things take time.



RACHEL MCADAMS WILL PROBABLY SAVE STRANGE'S LIFE

Judging by a shot of McAdams in scrubs by his bedside, we're pretty confident she's going to save him. Director Scott Derrickson told *EW* that she's "his sort of lynchpin to his old life."



IT'S GOING TO BE A MASTER-APPRENTICE STORY

Judging by the sheer amount of bald Tilda Swinton as the Ancient One in the trailer, it looks as though a lot of the film is going to comprise Strange's journey working under his master.



MADS MIKKELSEN IS THE MAIN VILLAIN

That Mads just can't get enough of that baddie action, can he? Or maybe people just keep casting him as the villain because he's Scandinavian? Either way, he's evil. We don't know his name, but he has a ponytail.



IT WILL BE DARK

From the source material, we know it will be dark. Then there's the fact that the script was written by Jon Spaihts (*Prometheus* and the upcoming *Van Helsing*) and C Robert Cargill (*Sinister* and *Sinister 2*, both with Scott Derrickson).



IT WILL KICK OFF PHASE THREE

One of the reasons we're so excited for Doctor Strange is that it's so new. We've never seen him in the MCU. It opens doors for Black Panther, the Inhumans and Captain Marvel. Also, we're suckers for new stuff.



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In our most recent uploads, we talk exclusively to the cast and crew of 2016's biggest superhero smackdown, *Captain America: Civil War*, as well as sharing our thoughts on the film in the latest of our '5 Things You Need To Know' series.

Elsewhere, we chat to Michael Shannon about Jeff Nichols' brilliant sci-fi *Midnight Special*, and take a look at *The Other Side Of The Door* with director Johannes Roberts and *The Walking Dead* star Sarah Wayne Callies. We also break down the biggest blockbusters like *The Huntsman: Winter's War*, *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*, *10 Cloverfield Lane*, *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* and *Deadpool*.



Doctor Strange hits UK cinemas on 28 October.

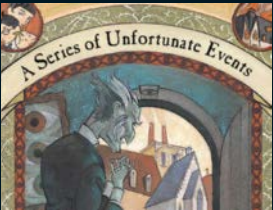
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**HBO'S WESTWORLD TV SERIES
IS FILMING AGAIN**

tinyurl.com/hu2hm6v



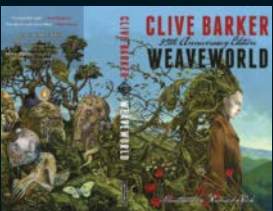
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**MARVEL'S OST WANTED CASTS
RESIDENT EVIL STAR**

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**CLIVE BARKER'S WEAVERWORLD
SERIES NEEDS A NEW WRITER**

tinyurl.com/gu2vqs8



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STAKES AND SONGS**

tinyurl.com/zez9yvv

COSPLAY OF THE MONTH

Send your cosplay to @SciFiNow
or Facebook.com/SciFiNow



TOOTH (RISE OF THE GUARDIANS)

CREATOR: STUART WARD COSPLAYER: ANGIE MULVEY FROM: BOURNEMOUTH PHOTOGRAPHER: JAMES SHEPPARD FACEBOOK: /TOOTH.COSPLAY TWITTER: @LEEDWOOD

1 THE CHARACTER

I've never made a costume before. One time when I visited my niece she was watching the Dreamworks animated movie, *Rise Of The Guardians*. I'd never seen it before, but thought it was so beautiful. My niece complained that the Tooth Fairy took her tooth and forgot to leave a gift, so I thought it would be amazing to create Tooth for real and have her come to my niece's seventh birthday carrying the cake.

2 THE COSTUME

The hardest thing I have ever done! I wanted her to be proportionate, and as her head is oversized I had to make the whole head. I wanted her to engage as a human, so the eyes, eyelids, mouth and crest all had to work by electronically tracking the natural facial movements of the performer. Getting it all to work over a real head was a real challenge. Making ten fully working wings was no easier!

3 THE DESIGN

I didn't use real feathers for the body. They wouldn't look right, and would soon get messy. So I did what Dreamworks did: paint individual feathers, and scan and lay them onto the body on the computer. The artwork was printed onto high-lustre lycra. Her head is full of sensors, electronics and motors. Her wings are exact scale carbon-fibre replicas that flap and fold, and she can even flick her tail!

4 THE ACCESSORIES

Tooth has a toothbox. Made from brass, with a computer, motor, gears and lights inside, it gives out light and opens just as in the movie when she holds it. Inside it has some 'teeth' which are actually pieces of popcorn! We also have Baby Tooth that flies by flapping her wings. She's adapted from a Flytech Dragonfly. Jack's staff is copper tubing wrapped in a twisted paper cord used for weaving seats.

**DAYS
OF FUTURE NOW**
Here are some
upcoming UK
conventions that you
can't afford
to miss...

**Manchester Film and Comic
Con**
21-22 May
Event City, Manchester
FilmAndComicCon
Manchester.com
Adults £8-15, children £4
Guests include Ken Kirzinger,
Noel Clarke, Chris Judge, Jessie
Cave and Andrew Lee Potts.

Comic Con Leicester
4-5 June
Athena Leicester
ComicConLeicester.co.uk
Adults £6-8, children £4/free*
Join fellow Midland geeks for a
two-day celebration of TV, film,
comics and culture. Packed
with plenty of stalls and like-
minded fans.

Lancaster Comics Day
5 June
Lancaster Library, Lancaster
DownTheTubes.net
Price TBC
Lancaster hosts its second ever
Comics Day, with special guests
including comic writer Andy
Diggle and novelist
AS Chambers.

Yorkshire Cosplay Con
11-12 June
Sheffield Arena, Sheffield
www.yorkshirecosplay
convention.co.uk/
Tickets £7.70-£16.50
From bad wig to handmade
armour, anyone with a love of
cosplay will have a blast at this
con dedicated to it.

*conditions apply

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**ANDREW
LEE POTTS**

PRIMEVAL

**CAMILLE
CODURI**

DOCTOR WHO

**CHRIS
BARRIE**

RED DWARF

**DEVON
MURRAY**

HARRY POTTER



**LALLA
WARD**

DOCTOR WHO



**SHANE
RIMMER**

THUNDERBIRDS



**MICHAEL
JAYSTON**

DOCTOR WHO



**SARAH
DOUGLAS**

SUPERMAN, STARGATE



**DANIEL
PORTMAN**

GAME OF THRONES



**JIMMY
VEE**

DOCTOR WHO



**PAUL
DARROW**

BLAKES 7, DOCTOR WHO



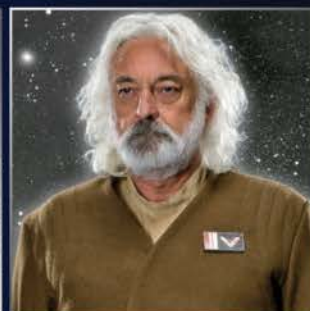
**JESSIE
CAVE**

HARRY POTTER



**SYLVESTER
MCCOY**

THE HOBBIT, DOCTOR WHO



**ANDREW
JACK**

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COVER FEATURE

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story

“DON'T WORRY. NO
BOTHANS DIED TO
BRING YOU THIS
INFORMATION”

STAR WARS™ ROGUE ONE

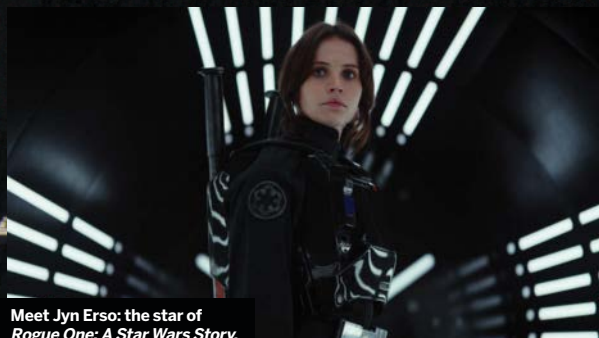
THE COUNTDOWN TO THE SAGA'S RETURN TO A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY HAS BEGUN, AND WE'LL BE THERE EVERY STEP OF THE WAY. IN THE MEANTIME, WE SEPARATE THE FACT FROM THE FICTION AS WE LOOK AHEAD TO GARETH EDWARDS' ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY...

WORDS STEVE WRIGHT

WHILE THE FORCE AWAKENS WAS THE BIG EVENT, IT'S ONLY WITH ROGUE ONE THAT STAR WARS TRULY FEELS LIKE IT HAS ENTERED A NEW ERA. THE FIRST OF A WHOLE ANTHOLOGY OF STANDALONE FILMS,

Gareth Edwards' prequel will depict the fledgling Rebellion's attempts to uncover the plans for the dreaded Death Star, presumably leading to the first major victory for the Rebels mentioned in the opening crawl for *A New Hope* so many years ago.

With young Rebel Jyn Erso (Felicity Jones) leading an impressive cast that includes the likes of Diego Luna, Riz Ahmed, Ben Mendelsohn, Forest Whitaker, Mads Mikkelsen, Donnie Yen, Wen Jiang, Alan Tudyk and many more, the potential *Rogue One* has is exciting in the extreme. In the pages ahead, we scour the galaxy for clues as to where the first *Star Wars* spin-off is heading. Don't worry: no Bothans died to bring you this information... ➤



Meet Jyn Erso: the star of *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*.

COVER FEATURE

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story

Jyn Erso is going to be kick-ass



"Forgery of Imperial documents; possession of stolen property; aggravated assault; resisting arrest." It's already quite a rap sheet, and one hell of an introduction to *Rogue One's* protagonist.

We can view any number of *Star Wars* characters in her: Han Solo's disdain for authority, Luke Skywalker's idealism and Rey's survival instinct, to name but a few. Her signature quote of, "It's a rebellion; I rebel," has already become a mantra, and considering how active a role she looks set to play, it could well define her.

Still, she clearly has the skills to back her statements up. Whether she's effortlessly taking out Stormtroopers (remember how much hard work Han made of just one in *Return Of The Jedi?*), creating explosions or running headlong into an advancing herd of AT-ATs, it's obvious she doesn't want for bravery.

Her role in the grand scheme of things remains to be seen – Daisy Ridley recently denied that Jyn was a descendant of Rey (then again, she would). Either way, the saga has another instantly iconic character with only the trailer to go on. Suck on that, internet sexists.

Mon Mothma will play a bigger role



The Rebel Alliance leader follows in the grand *Star Wars* tradition of characters' popularity being disproportionately high relative to their actual screen time (Mon Mothma has just the once scene in the original trilogy), but it's great to see that

fan service hasn't been jettisoned along with the Expanded Universe.

Here, Mon Mothma is played by Genevieve O'Reilly, who funnily enough was cast as the character in *Revenge Of The Sith* before having her scenes cut (though you can view these on the DVD). Nevertheless, the resemblance to original actress Caroline Blakiston is utterly uncanny – good to see that little things like continuity are being taken notice of.

Moreover, her presence here seems to bear more than a little nod to the Expanded Universe's portrayal of the character: softly spoken but full of authority, although not without a sense of humour, as evidenced by her smirk at Jyn's candour.

Chuck Wendig's tie-in novel *Star Wars: Aftermath* establishes that Mothma becomes the head of the newly formed Republic after the fall of the Empire, so *Rogue One* can be viewed as a beginning of sorts. While her role will almost certainly be a supporting one, it's nice to see her appear, much like it was to notice the likes of Nien Nunb and Admiral Ackbar in *The Force Awakens*.

WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

I find it hard to believe that this won't tie in to *The Force Awakens*. Daisy Ridley may say otherwise, but I reckon there's a family connection with Rey and Jyn.
STEVE WRIGHT



It seems as if Jyn and Diego Luna's character have a history together.

MON MOTHMA'S PRESENCE SEEMS TO BEAR A NOD TO THE EXPANDED UNIVERSE

NO JEDI

With no all-powerful protagonists knocking around, it'll be interesting to see how *Rogue One* gets by with no opportunities for epic lightsaber battles.

POPPY-JAY PALMER

Genevieve O'Reilly looks uncannily similar to the original Mon Mothma.

There's more to Diego Luna's character than meets the eye



If there's one character we can't quite put our finger on, it's this one. Seen sharing a loaded glance with Jyn (indicating some sort of shared history between the two), he is later seen accompanying her in a number of instances, such as when they're legging it with the X-Wing pilots, legging it away on the Jubilee line and legging it towards the AT-ATs. Maybe that's the connection; they're running buddies.

Early rumours that he is in fact Luke's ill-fated buddy Biggs Darklighter appear to have been quashed (mainly because he looks absolutely nothing like him), with *Making Star Wars* reporting that his name is in fact Cassein Willix. As this hasn't been confirmed yet we'll take it with a pinch of salt, but still, Cassein. That's a solid name.

Inevitably, the closeness of him to Jyn has inevitably led to talk that they might shack up at some point. Is he Rey's father? It's all speculation at the moment, but considering how every scene in the trailer is shared with Jyn, there's definitely some sort of closeness there.

Who is Forest Whitaker's character?



We've always been big Forest fans ever since his spellbinding turn as Idi Amin in *The Last King Of Scotland*, and it's great to see him show up in *Rogue One*.

Jyn aside, his character has perhaps caused more debate than any other



ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY

Everything You Need To Know About...



There's a lot of mystery surrounding Forest Whitaker's character.

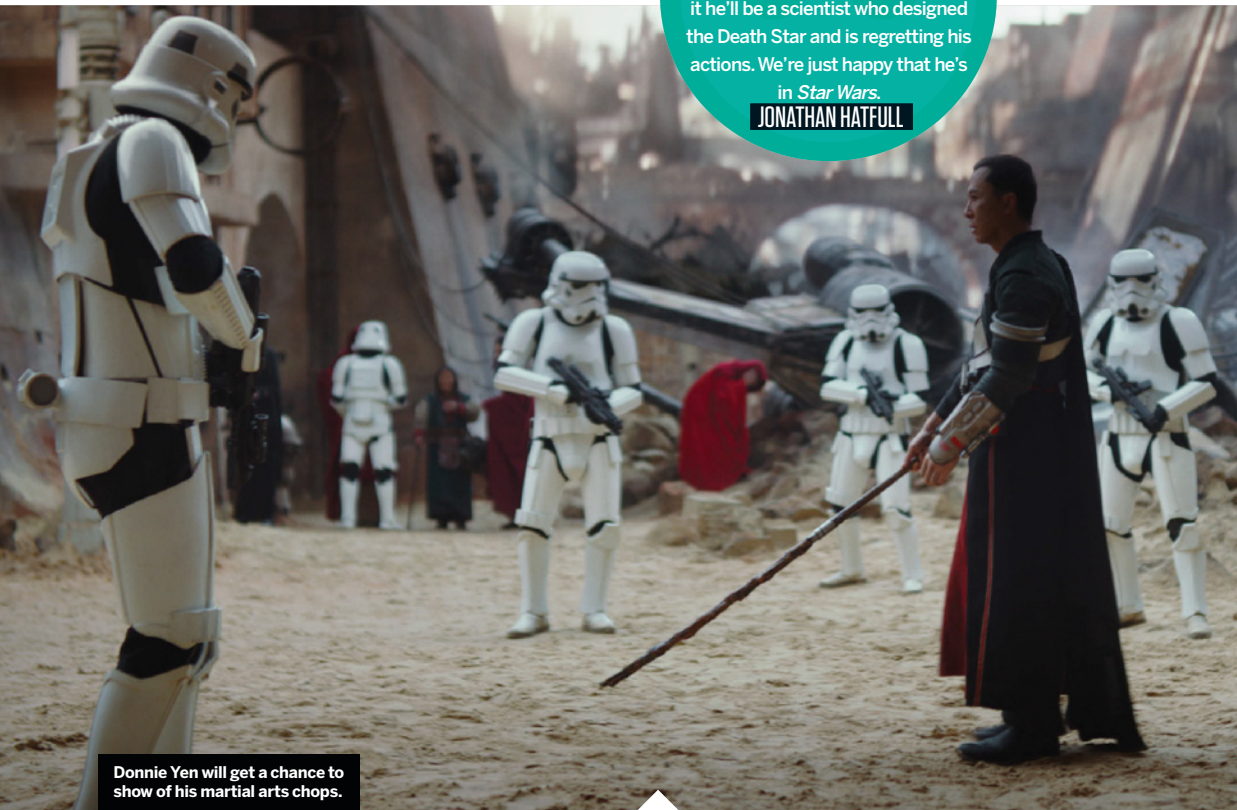


Wen Jiang will also fight for the forces of good in *Rogue One*.

GOOD MADS?

The *Hannibal* star has villainous form, but he's stated that he won't be playing a baddie. Rumour has it he'll be a scientist who designed the Death Star and is regretting his actions. We're just happy that he's in *Star Wars*.

JONATHAN HATFULL



Donnie Yen will get a chance to show off his martial arts chops.

thanks to his lumbering gait and formidable-looking attire. Judging by his scarred visage, laboured walking style and what seems to be some sort of breathing apparatus on his chest, we're theorising that he's a war veteran of sorts – either of the Rebellion itself, or perhaps the Clone Wars.

"What will you do if they catch you? What will you do when they break you? If you continue to fight, what will you become?" Asides from obviously being a barrel of laughs, he sounds like someone with first-hand experience of the Imperial jackboot and what it means to resist them. Then again, this could all be part of an act: after all, he is decidedly shifty-looking, so maybe his allegiance will turn out to be a bit more questionable.

Donnie Yen could become a fan favourite



One noticeable aim of the post-Lucas era has been to make the *Star Wars* universe feel like an actual universe, with both *The Force Awakens* and now *Rogue One* being far more culturally diverse when it comes to their cast. A case in point has been the casting of Chinese actors Donnie Yen and Wen Jiang, both being present in the trailer.

Out of the two, it's *Ip Man* star Yen who commands our attention the most. Ostensibly blind and surrounded by

Stormtroopers, he nevertheless makes short work out of them with some nifty staff work. To be able to do that, it begs the question: is he a Jedi? We're going to say no, but we wouldn't be surprised if he's a Force-wielder of some sort. After all, the precedent for the blind swordsman trope has been set by Kanan Jarrus in *Star Wars: Rebels*, who proved that he didn't need his sight to get the better of a swordsman as skilled and dangerous as Darth Maul.

We're sure that there will be more to Yen's character – he's far too good an actor and way too cool for there to not be – but in the meantime, we can revel in how utterly badass he looks, not to mention likelihood that he will be kicking plenty of Imperial chrome-plated ass. ➤

REBEL REBEL

RANKING THE STAR WARS SAGA'S RENEGADE WARRIORS

Luke Skywalker

REBELLIOUSNESS: 6
FIGHTING ABILITY: 9
TEMPER CONTROL: 5
CONSCIENCE: 9
TEAMWORK: 8



OVERALL: Didn't so much join the Rebellion as he was thrown into it, but he fully embraces his outsider status.

Anakin Skywalker

REBELLIOUSNESS: 9
FIGHTING ABILITY: 10
TEMPER CONTROL: 2
CONSCIENCE: 7
TEAMWORK: 4



OVERALL: Even when he was a Jedi he didn't play by the rules. Ultimately, it was his conscience that prompted him to make terrible decisions.

Ezra Bridger

REBELLIOUSNESS: 9
FIGHTING ABILITY: 4
TEMPER CONTROL: 5
CONSCIENCE: 10
TEAMWORK: 7



OVERALL: Left without a family, Ezra jumps at the chance to join the Rebellion. Still, his Dark Side susceptibility could be his downfall.

Rey

REBELLIOUSNESS: 5
FIGHTING ABILITY: 8
TEMPER CONTROL: 9
CONSCIENCE: 9
TEAMWORK: 8



OVERALL: Dutifully waited for her parents for years, even after experiencing the wider galaxy, but now she's involved in a wider conflict, she's there for good.

Jyn Erso

REBELLIOUSNESS: 10
FIGHTING ABILITY: 6
TEMPER CONTROL: 5
CONSCIENCE: 6
TEAMWORK: 7



OVERALL: Still an unknown quantity, Jyn nevertheless looks like she could become someone important in the Rebellion mythos. We'll see...

WHERE HAVE I SEEN THIS BEFORE?

HOW ROGUE ONE CONNECTS WITH THE WIDER UNIVERSE



BEN MENDELSON'S MOFF

As some have pointed out, the uniform worn by Mendelsohn's character is very similar to that worn by Wulff Yularen in *A New Hope*. The white uniform is from the Imperial Security Bureau – a clue to his character, perhaps?



YAVIN 4 BASE

Look at the two – if the two Imperial bases seen in *A New Hope* and the trailer for *Rogue One* aren't the same then they're at the very least very damn close. If it's not Yavin 4 then the Rebel interior design is very unoriginal.



IS THAT THE JUBILEE LINE?

Check out the background in this scene of Jyn and Diego Luna's character being chased by some angry-looking droid – we'd recognise that anywhere as the Canary Wharf tube station on the Jubilee line. And so did the internet.



GONK!

The GNK power droid – aka the Gonk droid – seen in the Jawa's sandcrawler in *A New Hope* makes a welcome appearance at the rebel base. Nice to see he's getting along okay for now, despite the grim future that lies ahead for him.



CRIMSON GUARDS

We're not sure who that is in the black cloak, but we'd recognise the Emperor's personal guards anywhere, indicating that Sidious himself isn't too far away. Considering how easily Yoda duffed them over, it'd be nice to see them show their stuff.



MON MOTHMA'S ACTRESS IS PERFECT

As you can see, Genevieve O'Reilly is a dead ringer for Caroline Blakison, who played the character in *Return Of The Jedi*. That casting couldn't be anymore spot on, and frankly the make-up department deserves a bunch of medals.



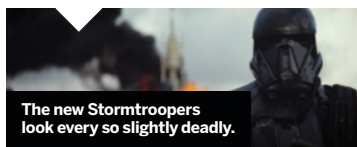
New Stormtrooper alert



Some might question the inclusion of new Stormtrooper designs alongside the original ones. Then again, it's worth remembering that the original trilogy only ever took place in a small portion of the *Star Wars* universe, so it's not inconceivable that there would be other types of trooper serving the Empire.

First up are the new dark armour-plated Stormtroopers. First seen standing menacingly alongside a burning outpost of some sort, and next firing their hefty-looking weapons at some unfortunates, it looks like they'll be shock troopers of some sort, judging by the fact that wherever they go, things seem to get set on fire. More than anything else, it means new merchandise – expect these to be extremely popular come Christmas time.

Also seen running along a corridor in some state of urgency are a more sandy variation on the scout troopers seen in *Return Of The Jedi* – which is pretty apt, considering that a lot of the action takes place on a tropical jungle planet, so for the purposes of camouflage, they're probably quite handy. While the bog-standard Stormtroopers seem to exist solely to be beaten up or flipped over by explosions, these guys will likely be far more formidable prospects.



The new Stormtroopers look every so slightly deadly.

A WORLD OF POSSIBILITY

It's entirely possible that we will see younger versions of the characters from the original trilogy. How about some Easter Egg-background young Leia?

JEN NEAL



Yep, the AT-ATs are back, and they're just as lethal as ever.

The Death Star looms large



With it being documented from the get-go that *Rogue One* would concern the Rebel attempts

to uncover the Death Star plans, it was inevitable that it would form a large part of the story, but it's still unsettling to see the superweapon in all its horrifying majesty, the shadow of the laser being lowered into place putting even a Super Star Destroyer in the shade.

Mon Mothma mentions a 'weapons test' of some sort being planned, so there's every chance we'll see first-hand what the Death Star can do, with the aid of better special effects than what could be afforded back in 1977. It'll probably be an uninhabited world – maybe



somewhere like Geonosis, which the new Expanded Universe confirmed has been rendered barren by the Empire – so it'll be just a taster of the destruction it causes in *A New Hope*.

In terms of the Death Star's role in the actual story, we're pretty sure it'll be the final set piece location – and we're even more sure that the final shot we see of Jyn is her inside said battle station. The site of an encounter with Ben Mendelsohn's character – or perhaps Darth Vader himself? We hope not, for their sake...

Ben Mendelsohn will be a cracking villain



Ben Mendelsohn is another actor we're happy to see hitting the big time. Having been simultaneously brilliant and utterly terrifying in near enough everything he's been in – from *Animal Kingdom* and *Bloodline* to *Lost River* – he's the perfect fit for *Star Wars* infamy.

From what we've seen of the character, despite being an Imperial officer (a

breed susceptible to being Force-choked by Vader), he seems flamboyant and unafraid to get his hands (or cloak) dirty, as seen by his striding into the aftermath of a battlefield, ignoring the numerous bodies strewn along his path.

James Luceno's newly canonical novel, *Tarkin*, established that Moffs largely choose their own attire, which would account for his dress code, and every factor seems to point towards him being a high-ranking official on the level of Grand Moff Tarkin. Of course, he won't be by himself; we're almost certain that Vader will be present, acting either as his muscle – or as the one breathing down his neck, ensuring that he gets results.



Locations old and new



Another mission statement of *Star Wars*' bold new era was the intention to eschew CGI

locations wherever possible, favouring instead real, practical environments. Again, *Rogue One* is living according to this mantra, with the two main locations consisting of a beachy/rainforest-esque location, and a shanty town in the mould of Tatooine's Mos Eisley.

The name or significance of these planets isn't known, but they both appear to be home to various entanglements of sorts: the former involving the AT-AT assaults and exploding Imperial transport, and the latter of Jyn and Donnie Yen's character's Stormtrooper skirmishes.

But that's not all: we could be returning to some familiar locations as well. The Rebel base has more than a hint of Yavin 4 about it, and of course we're pretty sure that's the Death Star at the end. As much as we love seeing new sides to the *Star Wars* universe, a bit of familiarity is good too, and it definitely wouldn't go amiss here. Whatever happens, our appetite has been whetted, and we can't wait to see what else is in store...

Rogue One: A Star Wars Story will be released in cinemas worldwide on 16 December 2016.

The AT-ATs are back to shake the earth



Ask anyone what the most iconic battle sequence in *Star Wars* history is, and it's likely that *The Empire Strikes Back*'s Battle of Hoth will rank highly, largely thanks to the presence of the hulking, nigh-on unstoppable AT-ATs. With this in mind, it's unsurprising that they have been brought back, although it's jarring to see them removed from the snowy locale in which they first made their existence to us known.

Judging by the fact that there are at least four of them in the trailer, wherever they are either has a strong Imperial presence or is the site of an important skirmish. We pity whoever has to face them.

Which means that Jyn et al have our sympathies thanks to their borderline suicidal antics in running headlong into a whole herd of the bloody things.

MAYBE WE'LL SEE WHAT THE DEATH STAR CAN DO, WITH THE AID OF BETTER SPECIAL EFFECTS THAN WHAT COULD BE AFFORDED BACK IN 1977

Ben Mendelsohn is the perfect choice for a villain role.

WHERE'S VADER?

There's no doubt that Ben Mendelsohn is going to make a great villain, but we also have to ask, where is Darth Vader? Will he feature, or is he still recovering from some minor burn wounds?

JONATHAN WELLS



BIG MOVIE

Wonder Woman

RISE OF THE WONDER

WORDS
ABIGAIL
CHANDLER

INTERVIEWS
ABIGAIL
CHANDLER,
ADAM
TANSWELL



WOMAN

SHE WAS ARGUABLY THE BEST THING ABOUT BATMAN V SUPERMAN, AND NOW WONDER WOMAN IS FINALLY GETTING HER DUE. WITH A SOLO MOVIE AND NEW COMICS ON THE HORIZON, WE SPOKE TO ACTRESS GAL GADOT AND THE WRITERS WHO KNOW HER BEST ABOUT WHAT MAKES DIANA PRINCE TICK...





BIG MOVIE

Wonder Woman

WHO IS WONDER WOMAN?

IT'S A QUESTION THAT IS ASKED OFTEN ENOUGH BY HER FANS, CRITICS, WRITERS AND ARTISTS, AND IT'S SOMETHING THAT GETS ANSWERED SLIGHTLY DIFFERENTLY EVERY TIME. SHE'S

a compassionate avatar of love. She's a ruthless warrior. She's made from clay. She's the daughter of Zeus. She's the Princess of Themyscira. She's the Goddess of War. She's a mod boutique owner, she's a de-powered martial artist, she's an amnesiac and a government agent. She wears trousers. She wears a bathing suit. Hell, she's not even always Diana Prince. She's been Hippolyta, Artemis, Donna Troy and Circe.

But whether or not we know exactly who she is, she's still an icon. At the premiere of *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*, the audience cheered precisely once. Not for either of the two title characters, nor for the much-hyped Justice League cameos, but for Wonder Woman.

They cheered when Gal Gadot showed up in costume for the first time, her wrists crossed, cuffs still burning red after deflecting the blast she saved Batman from. It was a perfect big-screen introduction for her – and it only took 75 years to get there.

That's not the last we're seeing of her though – she's finally getting her own big-screen outing, due in June 2017 and helmed by *Monster* director Patty Jenkins. Much of the film is being kept under wraps, but we do know that it'll be a back story to that 1918 photo of her glimpsed in *Batman V Superman*, fighting alongside Chris Pine's Steve Trevor.

Gal Gadot, the Israeli actress bringing her to life, gave us a little insight into what

to expect from the *Wonder Woman* film.

"In *Batman V Superman*, you are being introduced to a very experienced, dark Wonder Woman. She has been around for a while. Something happened 100 years ago that made her not want to be involved in a man's world. However, we are going to tell the entire coming of age story of Diana. We're going to see how she becomes Wonder Woman. She is very different to the Diana that you see in [*Dawn of Justice*]. She is more naïve and she's purer. She is a young idealist who does not yet understand the complexities of life."

We also know that we'll be seeing a lot of Themyscira, with Connie Nielsen as Hippolyta and Robin Wright as Diana's trainer Antiope, both of who look fierce as hell in early pictures. Lucy Davis will be playing Etta Candy, and David Thewlis and Danny Huston have both been cast in unnamed roles. The ever-changing nature of Wonder Woman means that she lacks the stable rogues gallery that Batman and Superman both have. That said, it's fairly likely that her debut solo outing will play to her mythological roots. But people are far more interested in seeing how Wonder Woman herself turns out than her supporting cast.

ORIGIN STORY

WONDER WOMAN WAS CREATED IN 1941 BY WILLIAM MOULTON MARSTON, A PSYCHOLOGIST WHO WANTED TO PRODUCE AN ANTIDOTE TO THE

hyper-masculine superheroes, one who didn't solve problems by punching things.

Marston was a feminist, albeit a brand of feminism that we wouldn't recognise today. He believed that women were superior to



Wonder Woman has always been a picture of strength: the equal – if not superior – of her contemporaries.

men, but in an almost fetishistic way. In 1937, he declared that women would one day rule the world. His idea was that men should naturally submit to the innate gentleness of women, and he criticised the 'masculine inferiority complex' that caused men to keep women in chains.

Wonder Woman is a character who has been tied to feminism since her inception, something which has caused her more than a little bit of trouble over the years. Both DC Comics and Warner Bros have been wary of having a female lead character. Meredith Finch, writer of the current *Wonder Woman* comic, says that thanks to the likes of *The Hunger Games*, *Bridesmaids* and *Spy*, "studios are starting to recognise that females and strong women sell movies and generate those blockbuster numbers."

DC Comics have also been faced with a near-constant (and generally self-created) dilemma of what to do with Wonder Woman. Make her too feminist, and they worry about alienating male readers. Don't make her feminist enough, and they lose female readers. And what exactly is feminist anyway? Putting her in trousers didn't make her more feminist – the female readers complained about the loss of her ➤

In one of her first appearances in *BvS*, Gal Gadot's Wonder Woman shut down Bruce Wayne's attempts at mansplaining.





“FOR DECADES, THEY’VE BEEN TRYING TO MAKE HER SOMETHING SHE’S NOT, THEY’VE BEEN TRYING TO MAKE HER A MALE HERO FOR A MALE AUDIENCE”

GAIL SIMONE



WONDER WOMAN REBOOTED

Yanick Paquette on Diana's Earth One debut



© Yanick Paquette

DC heroes in a world that more closely resembles our own.

Wonder Woman: Earth One has been written by Grant Morrison with art by Yanick Paquette – art that took him two and a half years to complete. We caught up with Paquette at the London Super Comic Con to talk to him about what we can expect from *Wonder Woman: Earth One*.

Morrison talked early on in the book's gestation about wanting to return to William Marston's idea of 'loving submission'; and the front cover, showing Wonder Woman in chains, elicited a strong – and not wholly favourable – response. "She's enchained because in the story this is how they solve their problems between Amazons,"

Paquette explains. "She's not enchained by manhood, she's not the victim, and if you read the story she actually chooses to go to that trial in order to express her views on something more modern in terms of feminism." The trial she faces in the book is the result of her taking in Steve Trevor after he crash-lands on Themyscira – a forbidden man on the island.

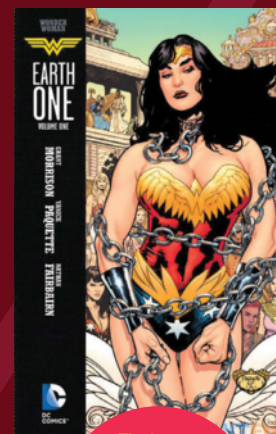
Paquette tells us that he knew that addressing feminism via Wonder Woman was going to create a strong reaction. "In the case of Wonder Woman I felt like, especially American society, needs to be told things about sexuality and feminism and all this, and by using Wonder Woman we knew from the start that it would be a touchy terrain to go, but also she's a wonderful mouthpiece to talk about the modern version of feminism."

Paquette was very wary of objectifying or overly sexualising Wonder Woman in this book. "In terms of the female figure, for instance, that was also one of my considerations for the book. The book is

in two parts. We're on the island where everything is perfect and superheroically looking, and this is the world of comics. But as soon as Wonder Woman goes to reality, I went out of my way to draw the most diverse, beautiful women I could do, of all size and shape and ethnicity, with the utmost respect."

"We keep in our run a lot of what Wonder Woman is in terms of the origins, but we're retelling some aspects of it," Paquette adds.

One thing he was keen to do was return to the compassionate and peaceful version of Wonder Woman. "There's almost no physical violence in it. Everything is as white as possible. The pages themselves, I've tried to keep the white of the paper almost as much as possible. Everything is super detailed, but the white of the paper will come through. As you read the book it feels very sunny and bright and positive and happy and sensual. So that's what I'm trying to do against the dark ages of DC."



The image of Wonder Woman in chains elicited a strong response from readers before the title was even released.



BIG MOVIE

Wonder Woman

iconic costume just as much as the male ones. So what is a comic publisher to do?

A FEMININE HERO

THE FACT IS THAT WONDER WOMAN CAN'T REPRESENT 'FEMINISM' ON HER OWN – NO SINGLE PERSON, REAL OR FICTIONAL, CAN DO THAT. BUT SHE CAN BE WHAT MARSTON

intended her to be – a female counterbalance to macho superheroes. Comic writer Gail Simone had a successful run on *Wonder Woman*, and has firm feelings about Diana's place in the DCU.

"For decades, they've been trying to make her something she's not; they've been trying to make her a male hero for a male audience," Simone tells us. "On the times where she's really, really sold well, that was never the agenda. She has been unapologetically female only a few times in her long career, and those have (not coincidentally) been the times of her greatest commercial and critical success."

And what are these qualities she upholds? Gal Gadot has talked a lot about the aspects she wants to bring to the screen, and while being a total badass is on the list, it's not at the top. She's spoken about making sure she is independent and that her compassion is front and centre. Of her appearance in *BvS*, Gadot says: "From the very first moment she is there, she is not there to serve anyone. She is not there to serve Superman, Batman, a love story or anything; she is there because she wants to be there, and everything she does is on her own terms."

To Gadot, what makes Wonder Woman strong are the typically 'female' qualities she possesses, like emotional intelligence and honesty, a willingness to show what she feels and embrace it as a strength.



“ SHE’S A WARRIOR PRINCESS... SHE CAN KNOCK YOU ON YOUR ASS, AND THEN EXTENDS A HAND TO PICK YOU UP AGAIN ”

GAIL SIMONE



Simone has similar ideas about Wonder Woman's strengths. "She's not Batman; she's her own thing. A million imitators have come and gone. I am always hoping for creators, be it comics or film, who really believe in her and do not try to make her something she's not. She's a warrior princess, the best fighter in the DC universe, and yet she's the very essence of compassion and mercy. She can knock you on your ass, and then she extends a hand to pick you up again."

Finch agrees. "For me, it always comes down to love. I think that [Diana] has such a tremendous love for humanity that it drives everything she does. She's not an aggressive warrior princess to me. The warrior in her comes out to defend who she loves."



An icon of feminism, she graced the front cover of the 35th anniversary edition of *Ms.*, a feminist magazine.

"If you don't have her showing compassion," Simone adds, "you've missed the point. She is an ass-kicker, yes, but she has to offer more than that. She's never going to be Wolverine."

THE WARRIOR PRINCESS

THE ASPECT OF WONDER WOMAN THAT IS THE EASIEST TO SELL, CERTAINLY IN THIS DAY AND AGE, IS HER WARRIOR SIDE. WHEN SIMONE CALLS HER THE BEST FIGHTER IN

the DC universe, that's not an opinion – it's fact. In all the versions of Diana, she is always a highly trained warrior, the best of an entire *race* of warriors. She's defeated all of the Justice League in one-on-one

DIANA THROUGH THE DECADES

Charting the on-screen incarnations of the Princess of Themyscira



1967

WHO'S AFRAID OF DIANA PRINCE

Played by: Linda Harrison

The pilot episode for a never-to-be-aired series, the costume seemed to be the inspiration for Lynda Carter's incarnation. Disappointingly, it didn't draw much upon the comics, with Diana re-imagined as a Clark Kent-esque hapless alter ego.



1974

WONDER WOMAN

Played by: Cathy Lee Crosby

As you can probably tell from the costume, this TV movie played more as a spy drama in the mould of *The Avengers* and *James Bond* (while simultaneously passing as a PE teacher), although Diana still possessed some powers, such as strength, agility and Amazon bracelets.



1975-79

WONDER WOMAN

Played by: Lynda Carter

Easily the most iconic representation of the character in live action, the series ran across three seasons for 60 episodes between 1975-79, helping cement her status as a pop-culture icon and greatly influencing her comics portrayal in the process.



WONDER WOMAN

Rise Of The Wonder Woman



Wonder Woman's warrior side is just as important as her compassionate side. Opting not to fight isn't much of a choice when you're not a trained fighter. So when Wonder Woman opts for diplomacy or rehabilitation in place of war or punishment, it means something. That's something Gadot understands more than most, having served two years in the Israeli army as a combat trainer.

She knows, "how to use a gun and I know how to do a combat fight," but also knows the strain of being a soldier, "because you give up your freedom for two years at least. But on the other hand, there is something beautiful about giving back to the community... and that is our way to give back to the country, by serving it."

Gadot makes one very firm point before she begins to tell us about her time in the army: "I wish no country would ever need an army." The more we talk to her, the more like Diana she seems.

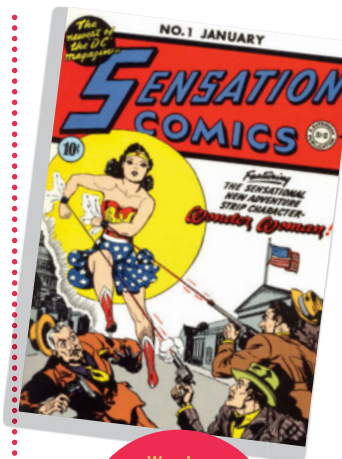
combat. She's been at it for thousands of years. She knows what she's doing.

When Wonder Woman shows up in costume in *BvS*, she turns the tide of a fight that neither of the title heroes were winning. But Gadot promises us that while there will be action, that's not the film's *raison d'être*. "I think that the heart of the movie is about the coming of age of Diana. Diana is so passionate about life and she is so passionate about love and truth and justice – and she is very inspiring, even to me. One of the reasons why Patty Jenkins agreed to do this movie was because of the core story. The action is fantastic. You will have action – but we have a very, very solid story to tell."

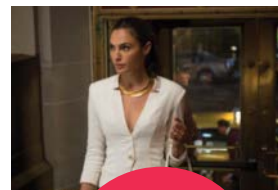
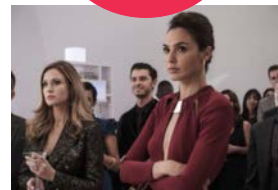
WHICH WONDER WOMAN ARE WE GOING TO GET?

THERE ARE A TON OF INTERPRETATIONS OUT THERE. JOSS WHEDON, WHEN HE WAS WORKING ON HIS CANNED FILM, FAMOUSLY SAID THAT HE WAS STRUGGLING TO

find the one iconic story to tell for her on screen. Finch had a similar concern when she began her run on the comics, saying, "There's so many fabulous Wonder Woman stories out there. If I started reading everything I'll intimidate myself, and I'll get so bogged down with it that I won't even be able to get off of the ground."



Wonder Woman appeared in *Sensation Comics* #1 in 1942 following her debut in *Action Comics* #8 the year before.



Her appearance in *Batman V Superman* wasn't just limited to saving the day. She was mysterious and wonderful.

And even the best interpretations of Wonder Woman are still not perfect. Simone was bothered by the fact that she is usually played pretty straight-laced. "The one thing I felt was missing from even her best portrayals was a sense of humour. I wanted her to have a wry, dry wit in response to the absurdity around her. Some sort of steam release is pretty much an essential tool in every strong female's toolbox, just to keep from exploding over every micro-goofer. I wanted it to be that she saw the funny side. She carries a lasso and fights gods. I'd make jokes."

Most people have their dream version of Wonder Woman. But most people can't even agree on her origin. We know that Batman's parents were gunned down in the street and that Superman's biological parents sent him to Earth when Krypton was destroyed. They are set in stone. Wonder Woman, on the other hand, is the daughter of Hippolyta, Queen of the Amazons, but we still don't know whether big-screen Wendy was made of clay or was born naturally, after Hippolyta had an affair with Zeus. Both are considered valid. So which way will the film go?

"Telling the Wonder Woman story is much bigger than me, and I am just the vessel who got lucky enough to tell her story," Gadot tells us, "but I think that her story needs to be told. It's so inspiring and there's no better time than now. It's about time that we tell this story."

Whatever Wonder Woman we get on the big screen, we can be sure that the audience agrees with Gadot on that point: It's about damn time. ✧

Wonder Woman will be released in cinemas on 23 June 2017.



2001

WONDER WOMAN

Played by: Adrienne Palicki
This NBC/Warner Bros co-production drew mockery in the wake of the paparazzi shots of filming being leaked. The final product was just as badly received, with the costume, liberties taken with the character and the 'Invisible' Jet coming in for particular derision.

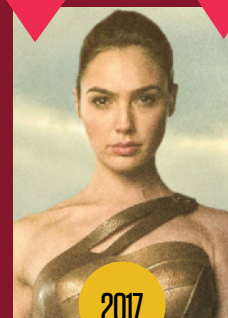


2016

BATMAN V SUPERMAN: DAWN OF JUSTICE

Played by: Gal Gadot

This is more like it. Some weren't happy with the muted colours and *Xena: Warrior Princess*-esque design, but in the event Gal Gadot's portrayal turned out to be one of the highlights of an otherwise confusing and baffling film.



2017

WONDER WOMAN

Played by: Gal Gadot

The prequel (and Wonder Woman's first solo movie) will take the character back to her roots, presumably showing her in her full glory of a warrior of Themyscira and beyond. At this point she is less superhero and more warlord, but no less lethal or powerful.



BIG MOVIE

Justice League: Part One

10 COMICS YOU NEED TO READ BEFORE JUSTICE LEAGUE: PART ONE

CONFOUNDED BY BATMAN V SUPERMAN? GET TO GRIPS WITH THE DC
UNIVERSE BEFORE THE BIG TEAM-UP IN 2017...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

JUSTICE LEAGUE: PART ONE

10 Comics You Need To Read

1 JLA: YEAR ONE #1-12

Published: January 1998-December 1998 **Writers:** Mark Waid (#1-9, #11-12), Brian Augustyn (#1-10, #12) **Pencils:** Barry Kitson **Inks:** Barry Kitson (#1-3), Michael Blair (#4-8), John Stokes (#6) **Colours:** Pat Garrahy **Letters:** Ken Lopez **Cover:** Barry Kitson

If you're wanting to get up to date with the Justice League of America in their comic-book origins, *JLA: Year One* is definitely the place to start. The 12-issue maxi-series reimagines the origins of the superhero squad for the rebooted Post-Crisis environment, and features the likes of Wonder Woman, The Flash, Aquaman, Black Canary, Green Lantern and Martian Manhunter. More interesting is the fact that founding fathers Batman and Superman are marginalised for the story, acting more as the team's support group than actual team members, which gives fans a perfect opportunity to get to know the rest of the Justice League a little better.

2 DC: THE NEW FRONTIER VOLUME 1 #1-3

Published: March 2004 – November 2004 **Writers:** Darwyn Cooke **Pencils:** Darwyn Cooke **Inks:** Darwyn Cooke **Colours:** Dave Stewart **Letters:** Darwyn Cooke **Cover:** Jared K Fletcher

Golden Age and Silver Age superheroes of the Fifties come together in acclaimed artist Darwyn Cooke's six-part saga, *DC: The New Frontier* Volume One. Taking place during the tension of the Cold War, it acts as a bridge of sorts between the two eras, and sees Batman, Superman and Wonder Woman introduced to characters like The Flash and Martian Manhunter. Fans of the likes of *Watchmen*, *Kingdom Come*, *The Golden Age* and *The Dark Knight Returns*, which all had an impact in influencing the series, will have a great time with *New Frontier*.





BIG MOVIE

Justice League: Part One

3 CYBORG VOLUME 1 #1-9

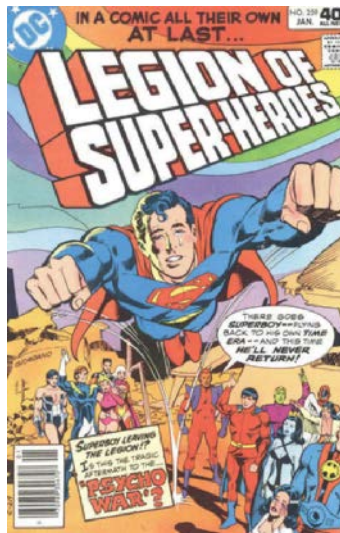
Published: September 2015-May 2016 **Writers:** David F Walker **Pencils:** Ivan Reis (#1-6), Eduardo Pansica (#3), Felipe Watanabe (#4-6, #8-9), Daniel HDR (#5-6, #8), Cliff Richards (#6), Claude St Aubin (#7), Julio Ferreira (#8-9) **Inks:** Joe Prado (#1-4), Ray McCarthy (#2), Scott Hanna (#2, #4), Wayne Faucher (#4), Oclair Albert (#5-6, #8-9), Julio Ferreira (#5-6, #8-9), Andy Owens (#5, #7), Juan Castro (#5), Cliff Richards (#6) **Colours:** Adriano Lucas, Pete Pantazis (#4-6) **Letters:** Rob Leigh (#1-2, #4, #7-9), Corey Breen (#3), Travis Lanham (#6) **Cover:** Ivan Reis (#1-6), Joe Prado (#1-6), Adriano Lucas (#1-6), Szymon Kudranski (#7), Derec Donovan (#8), Dan Panosian (#9)

This nine-part story is essential reading for anyone who wants to be clued in on Cyborg, aka Victor Stone, before his first appearance (not including that fleeting *Dawn Of Justice* cameo) in the DC Cinematic Universe, and indeed in a live action-film, in *The Justice League: Part One*. The story revolves around the upgraded Cyborg after a terrifying near-death experience changed something in his cybernetics. Now, with both new powers and a brand new look, the hero finds himself in a situation he never thought he'd be in, where his upgrades might just end up becoming his downfall. When his technology starts to operate in a peculiar manner, sending out signals to invading Technosapiens, he has no choice but to go on the run in an attempt to avoid an army of beings that are determined to get their hands on him. With intense action, threat and suspense, not to mention amazing artwork, this is the perfect introduction to Cyborg.



"Barry Allen was by all accounts the greatest force for good in the DC Universe, so he was brought back... as a signal of ushering in the new age of heroes"

Geoff Johns, writer of *The Flash: Rebirth* to *io9*



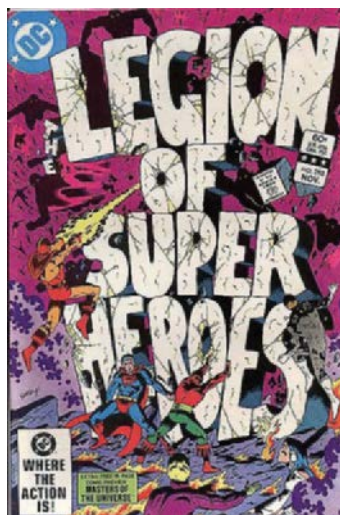
4 THE GREAT DARKNESS SAGA LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES VOLUME 2 #290-294

Published: August 1982-December 1982 **Writers:** Paul Levitz **Pencils:** Keith Giffen, Larry Mahlstedt (#290) **Inks:** Larry Mahlstedt **Colours:** Carl Gafford **Letters:** John Costanza (#290, #292-#294), Annette Kawecky (#291) **Cover:** Keith Giffen, Frank Giacola (#290), Romeo Tanghal (#291), Larry Mahlstedt (#294)

The all-powerful villain Darkseid takes centre stage in *Legion Of Super-Heroes* story 'The Great Darkness Saga'.

It's pretty much a given that the ruler of Apokolips will make a film appearance at some point, what with him being a major player in the cosmic war, and this arc is the perfect one to start with to get acquainted with him.

Virtually every living past and present Legionaire (at the time) needs their wits about them when they go up against the insanely powerful being. It's a tale of epic proportions and an absolute must for fans of characters like Chameleon Boy, Dawnstar, Phantom Girl and more.



5 WONDER WOMAN: THE HIKETEIA

Published: April 2004 **Writers:** Greg Rucka **Pencils:** JG Jones **Inks:** Wade Von Grawbadger **Colours:** Dave Stewart **Letters:** Todd Klein **Cover:** JG Jones

Described as a modern Greek tragedy of duty and vengeance, *Wonder Woman: The Hiketeia* should be the first go-to for comic-book virgins who want to pop their Diane Price cherry after falling in love with Gal Gadot's version of the character. It's also often described as the best Wonder Woman story so far. The story centres on our heroine after she partakes in the Hiketeia, an ancient ritual, and becomes honour-bound to eternally protect a young woman named Danielle Wellys. However, her job becomes difficult when she finds out Wellys is also a fugitive, and one that Batman is looking for.

TOP 5 RECENT DC COMICS

You should be adding these to your 'to read' pile

The Omega Men

A group of polyglot beings kidnap the former Green Lantern and make him join a campaign of anarchy.



The Legend Of Wonder Woman

Get to know Diana of Themyscira in her childhood in this stunning miniseries.



Robin War

All the Robins (yes, those Robins) go head-to-head with cops, Batman, the Court of Owls and more.



Starfire

Alien warrior princess Starfire gets a colourful reboot in her new series from the *Harley Quinn* team.



DC Comics Bombshells

This alternate-reality story looks at the super-powered women on the front lines of World War II.





6 WONDER WOMAN SPIRIT OF TRUTH

Published: November 2001 **Writers:** Paul Dini, Alex Ross **Pencils:** Alex Ross
Inks: Alex Ross **Colours:** Alex Ross **Letters:** Typeset **Cover:** Alex Ross

We're convinced there's no greater introduction to Wonder Woman than *Wonder Woman: Spirit Of Truth*. In the fourth instalment of Alex Ross

and Paul Dini's six-part *The World's Greatest Super-Heroes* series, Diana Prince goes through a crisis of faith while she struggles to understand who she is, what she represents and the nature of her mission on this Earth. After a woman she saved from a moving tank tells her they are not alike, Wonder Woman is forced to look at herself and her abilities and decided if she's a heroine and a demigoddess or a human being.



7 THRONE OF ATLANTIS JUSTICE LEAGUE VOLUME 3: THRONE OF ATLANTIS

Published: September 2013 **Writers:** Geoff Johns **Pencils:** Paul Pelletier **Inks:** Cam Smith, Ruy Jose, Marlo Alquiza, Sean Parsons, Joe Prado, Pere Perez, Ivan Reis, Oclair Albert **Colours:** Tony Avina, Rod Reis, Nathan Eyring **Letters:** Dezi Sienty, Dave Sharpe, Nick J Napolitano **Cover:** Joe Prado, Ivan Reis



Get a proper introduction to Aquaman (played by Jason Momoa in the DC Cinematic Universe) with this *New 52* six-issue arc. After a US Naval missile goes awry and takes out most of Atlantis, Aquaman's brother Ocean Master decides to declare war on the East Coast of the United States. It's not long before Metropolis and Gotham City are underwater, and things get truly out of hand. With help from his new brethren from the Justice League, Aquaman attempts to go against his brother and turn the tides before the East Coast is wiped out for good. If that quickie shot of Momoa and his glorious floating locks got you excited for *The Justice League: Part One*, *Throne Of Atlantis* is the natural next course of action.



8 THE FLASH: REBIRTH #1-6

Published: June 2009-April 2010 **Writers:** Geoff Johns **Pencils:** Ethan Van Sciver **Inks:** Ethan Van Sciver **Colours:** Alex Sinclair (#1-2), Brian Miller (#3-6) **Letters:** Rob Leigh **Cover:** Ethan Van Sciver, Moose Baumann (#1), Alex Sinclair

You may already know the story behind the Flash if you're currently watching the TV series of the same name, but Geoff Johns' *The Flash: Rebirth* series shows the fastest man alive in a completely different light. The Flash is reintroduced as Barry Allen (the version of the character that Ezra Miller is set to play in *The Justice League: Part One*), who finds himself caught in a web of crime when a mysterious man wielding a spear with a lightning bolt-shaped tip tried to recreate the accident that first gave the Flash his powers.



READ BEFORE
THE FLASH

9 THE DEATH OF SUPERMAN SUPERMAN: MAN OF STEEL VOLUME 1 #17-19

Published: November 1992-January 1993 **Writers:** Louise Simonson **Pencils:** Jon Bogdanove **Inks:** Dennis Janke **Colours:** Glenn Whitmore **Letters:** Bill Oakley **Cover:** Jon Bogdanove



READ BEFORE
JUSTICE LEAGUE: PART 1

The Death Of Superman arc has (spoiler warning) already been explored in *Batman V Superman: Dawn Of Justice*, but issues #17-19 of *Man Of Steel* Volume 1 are a great starting point for any DC movie fan who wants to know more about Kal-El's 'demise'. Issue #17 features the first appearance of Doomsday, issue #18 has Superman getting down and dirty while trying to deal with the exiled Underworlders, and issue #19 – the last in the series – brings Superman and Doomsday's battle to the unsuspecting streets of Metropolis. Only one can win; the clue's in the title. Or is it?

10 THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS BATMAN: THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS #1-4

Published: February 1986-June 1986 **Writers:** Frank Miller **Pencils:** Frank Miller **Inks:** Klaus Janson **Colours:** Lynn Varley **Letters:** John Costanza **Cover:** Frank Miller, Lynn Varley



READ BEFORE
BATMAN SOLO MOVIE

Frank Miller's four-part series is a *Batman* staple for a few reasons: firstly, it introduces 13-year-old Carrie Kelley as the new Robin for the first time after she saves Batman's life; secondly, it culminates with an epic confrontation against Superman; and thirdly, it's brilliant. It's a dark story set in a dystopian near-future version of Gotham City, where levels of crime are rapidly rising after going without its hero for over a decade. At 55, Bruce Wayne experiences a breakthrough and decides it's finally time to emerge from retirement. Following his most basic instincts, he dons the Batsuit once more.



"Batman is interesting because he straightens the world out. You need somebody, even if it's a fictional character, to tell you that the world makes sense and the good guys can win. That's what these heroes are for."

Frank Miller, writer of *The Dark Knight Returns* to *The Hollywood Reporter*

COME THE

APOCALYPSE



LYPSE

BRYAN SINGER AND THE X-MEN TEAM TELL US WHY
THE END OF THE WORLD IS JUST THE BEGINNING...

WORDS
JONATHAN
HATFULL

“OTHER FRANCHISES, THEY REBOOT, THEY RECAST, THEY DO ALL THESE THINGS. I DON’T DO THAT”
BRYAN SINGER

TEAM LEADER Tye Sheridan on Cyclops



When you think ‘by the book leader’, you think Cyclops. Scott Summers has always been the stern right hand of Charles Xavier, as faithfully played by James

Marsden in the previous *X-Men* films, but *Apocalypse* shows the character in a very different light...

Is it exciting to get to give a new take on a character people know so well?

Absolutely. What’s great is that it’s an origin story for all these characters that we’ve seen over the years, and we kind of get to see where they started in their lives. When we meet Scott he hasn’t yet discovered his mutant powers. He was a different person in this. Over the years we’re going to see him evolve.

Do we see much of his relationship with his brother Alex, aka Havok?

Yeah, Scott’s kind of a stubborn kid who doesn’t like to listen to his brother, even though he knows he’s been through what Scott’s going through now. And so you see him start to open up to him, and then Havok kind of helps him and introduces him to Professor X. What I love about this franchise is it’s not only a story about superheroes defeating the bad guy; it’s more than that. It’s about characters, where they come from and some of the demons that they’re battling.

Is it intimidating to jump into a franchise with such a long history?

You just go with what’s on the page, which is incredible, vivid and really rich. I think oftentimes in a big franchise people don’t have a chance to work with really great material, but I think *X-Men* is one of the rare franchises where the material’s great, the cast is great and everyone on board is at the top of their game. It makes it really, really fun.

Oscar Isaac is unrecognisable as *Apocalypse*, a villain with biblical values.

THE X-MEN FRANCHISE HAS NEVER STRUGGLED TO EVOLVE. IT’S PROVEN ITSELF TO BE ENDLESSLY ADAPTABLE WHILE NEVER LOSING SIGHT OF WHAT

makes it unique. That’s how it started the superhero movie revolution in 2000, and that’s why, 16 years later, it continues to be a vital presence in a multiplex filled with Marvel universe building and DC glowering. *Days Of Future Past* was a critical and commercial hit of the kind the series hadn’t enjoyed since *X2: X-Men United* back in 2003, but this isn’t a series that likes to rest on its laurels.

“I knew that the sequel had to be radically different to *Days Of Future Past*,” Bryan Singer says. “This had to be about something radically different, and ancient mutants, the notions of gods and religion and things like that are so different from all the other *X-Men* films. I knew that this was the right move for me, because if I keep making the same *X-Men* film over and over again I’ll kill myself,” he laughs. “So if I’m going to spend two years of my life on another *X-Men* film, it’s got to be different, challenging and unique.”

For all the pre-release online panic about how *DOFP* would inevitably be too cluttered, confusing and ambitious, Singer and writer Simon Kinberg absolutely pulled it off. Not only did they deliver one of the most complex time-travel stories in a universe not exactly light on them; they gave themselves the opportunity to do something

very different in future instalments. The timeline has changed. We’re not necessarily on the path to 2000’s *X-Men*, so the prospect of meeting young Scott Summers (Tye Sheridan), Jean Grey (Sophie Turner) and Ororo Munroe (Alexandra Shipp), not to mention Kurt Wagner (Kodi Smit-McPhee) is very exciting indeed. Nothing is set in stone.

“I would always talk with Ian [McKellen] and Patrick [Stewart] about their origins, but I never got to show them,” remembers Singer. “*X-Men: First Class* was the beginning of the birth, and the conclusion was going to be the introduction of young Jean, Scott and Storm. That to me is such a thrill, because all three actors are brilliant: Sophie, Tye, and Alexandra, and to be able to do that and also to be able to play with timelines in a way that no other franchise has.”

“Other franchises, they reboot, they recast, they do all these things. I don’t do that,” he continues. “We go back in time, we alter time, but we don’t just sit there and go, ‘Okay, let’s cast a new Wolverine! Let’s cast a new Magneto!’ No, let’s cast a younger Magneto. Ian McKellen is older Magneto. Michael Fassbender is younger Magneto. So not only do I get to play with the older and younger lives of these characters, I also get to move through a timeline back and forth, and actually with the last film, alter the timeline to buy myself the freedom to take the franchise anywhere it wants to go. It could repeat

Storm (Alexandra Shipp) and Magneto (Michael Fassbender) serve as two of the Horsemen.



TAKING FLIGHT Ben Hardy on Angel

Joining Magneto, Psylocke and Storm in Apocalypse's army of darkness is Warren Worthington III, aka Angel. We spoke to former *Eastenders* star Ben Hardy about donning wings...



Where do we find Warren at the start of the film?

When we find Warren he's already in a very dark place. He's not necessarily a villain at that point, but he's already in a very angry place. He's not necessarily the billionaire benefactor of X-Factor that we see in the comics. He's not a good-natured character at the stage we find him in.

It's your first big film and it's effects-heavy. Does it help having a director like Bryan Singer, who's been through this before?

Yeah, he is *X-Men*! To work with him is incredible, and obviously he knows how to make these films. There's so much green screen and so much visual effects, I

find it difficult to picture what it's going to look like, and obviously he knows because he's done it so many times and he's got that vision, so you'll forget things and he'll go, "No, you can't do that because your wing would collide with that wall there, and I'm going to have your wing going like this!"

Do you think *Apocalypse* is as ambitious as *Days Of Future Past*?

Yeah, it's kind of like the ultimate... I mean, it's the apocalypse, you know what I mean? It's biblical; it's the end of the world! They're also introducing all these new characters, and they've got to do the back stories of each one. Seven origin stories!



Evan Peters returns as Quicksilver, arguably the best part of *DOFP*.

itself; it could land right back where *X-Men 1, 2 and 3* landed, or it could end up with *Deadpool*! It could go anywhere."

AS FREEING AS THAT SOUNDS, THERE'S ALSO THE FACT THAT APOCALYPSE NEEDS TO SERVE AS THE CONCLUSION TO THE TRILOGY STARTED WITH FIRST CLASS,

fully establishing Charles Xavier's School For Gifted Youngsters not only as a haven for young mutants, but as the *X-Men* base. *First Class* saw Erik become Magneto, and *DOFP* gave us Charles' journey to Professor X, but they've still got paths to follow, and the same is true of Jennifer Lawrence's Raven Darkholme/Mystique and Nicholas Hoult's Hank McCoy/Beast. Kinberg tells us that this needs to be as much of a finale as it is an introduction.

"The two things for me that were the most exciting new challenges and big goals were to give the main characters – who I imagine to be Charles, Erik, Mystique and Hank – really rich, emotional arcs, and to complete a trilogy of stories that began in *First Class* for them," Kinberg tells us. "Then the opportunity to construct a new Jean, Scott, Storm and Nightcrawler and to show sides of them you've never seen before. I'm 42 years old; I'm not the same person as when I was as a teenager. It was this great opportunity to take, as an example, the squeaky-clean, rules-following Scott Summers who James Marsden played, and go in the opposite direction. He's a troublemaker and antisocial, and very far from a leader. Seeing the beginning of the evolution of the character to me has been great fun."

The prospect of seeing the core team (with some slight changes) get kitted up and thrown into the thick of things is thrilling, but there are other audience expectations to consider. With the return of Nightcrawler, not to mention

Evan Peters' scene-stealing Quicksilver, comes yet another challenge: how do you top some of the franchise's best action sequences? Nightcrawler's BAMF-ing assault on the White House was the highlight of *X2*, while we all know how Quicksilver's prison-break sequence worked out, and Singer tells us that upping the ante was absolutely necessary.

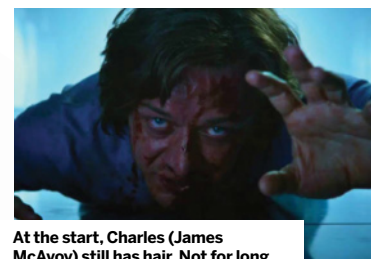
"We're seeing Nightcrawler do things he's never done in previous films, and we have a Quicksilver sequence that literally lasts two minutes and took one and a half months to shoot, it was so complex," he enthuses. "It involved probably every type of technology in the film, from the most advanced high-speed cameras, shooting 3D at 3,000 frames per second to explosive algorithms to stunt work and wire work, it's incredible. Evan worked 17 days on this one sequence alone."

The catalyst for all this action is something that the *X-Men* movies have not given us before. Xavier's gifted youngsters have tackled government forces, the military, each other, and obviously Magneto on a regular basis, but the cinematic universe has never presented the audience with something like *Apocalypse*. "We've had a handful of villains that are not Magneto, but we've never really had a villain that was more powerful than Magneto," Kinberg enthuses. "We really liked the idea that the threat to the world would be greater than anything that we've seen in these movies before, because these movies tend to be local in their threat or a little more political or intellectual in their threat. The notion of a global-level extinction event kind of climax felt exciting to us."

The Charles vs Erik dynamic has provided the *X-Men* cinematic franchise with some of its most potent dramatic material, and has already been somewhat subverted in *DOFP*, but this will be the



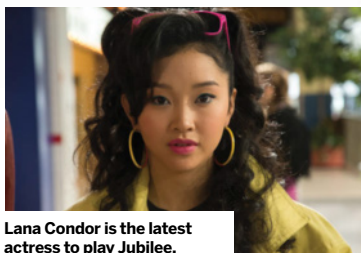
This time, Magneto is following someone else's lead.



At the start, Charles (James McAvoy) still has hair. Not for long...

BIG MOVIE

X-Men: Apocalypse



Lana Condor is the latest actress to play Jubilee.

➤ first time we've seen Magneto willingly used by someone with greater power than himself. "Yeah, the biggest challenge is how do you create a villain and a story that puts Magneto – played by Michael Fassbender, one of the most truly extraordinary actors in the world – how do you create a villain who can seduce that character?" laughs Singer. "Magneto? Who lifts up stadiums, who's one of the ultimate villains of *X-Men*, to serve the needs of Apocalypse? How do you bring Magneto to that point, and what does Apocalypse represent to Magneto?"

That's up to Apocalypse. This is the first time that we've seen the franchise really commit to a villain of this size, literally and figuratively, and Singer tells us that the character's long shadow was part of the appeal. "I love the villain of Apocalypse. He makes no distinction between humans and mutants," he enthuses. "He believes that Earth owes him worship, owes him respect for being the father of civilisation, and if he doesn't get that respect and doesn't get that worship, then he will

destroy. He believes that he is the god of the Old Testament.

"Before he came along, men were beating each other over the heads with rocks for a piece of meat, and he gave them civilisation, but humans have free will," continues Singer. "They begin to betray their gods, they lose their faith, and once they do that he wipes them out and starts a new civilisation. But suddenly Apocalypse finds himself trapped for over 4,000 years, and then he wakes up in 1983, and to him it's all one giant, corrupt, lost, misguided civilisation that needs to be cleansed. And it's his job, as the god of the Old Testament, to do that."

BRINGING THAT CHARACTER TO THE BIG SCREEN WAS ANOTHER OF ITS CHALLENGES, AS SINGER AND KINBERG DITCHED THE GIANT SEMI-ROBOTIC

idea ("If he's a giant then all my actors are going to be looking up to a CGI character," laughs Singer), to focus on the character rather than the look. This is a mutant who convinces Psylocke (Olivia Munn), Storm, Angel (Ben Hardy) and Magneto to join him in his quest to cleanse the Earth as his Four Horsemen. "One of his greatest powers is that of persuasion. It was important to me that he be able to connect with the mutants he's recruiting, his four horsemen, and almost humanise himself. But in reality it's all a seduction."

It's hard to think of an actor who's as prolific and exciting as Oscar Isaac, but

The Force Awakens star's love of the comics meant that he was able to find time in his packed schedule to play an ancient, power-mad semi-deity. "We've been really blessed in having one of the best casts ever put together, and it really required an actor with the same sort of craft and power," explains producer Hutch Parker. "Luckily, Oscar's a huge fan of the comics, and he was really excited by the opportunity. He and Bryan had great conversations, and he proved to be a perfect fit. I can't imagine anyone else playing the role."

As crucial as the incredible cast is, Parker is quick to stress the importance of the Singer/Kinberg duo. The latter has been involved since *The Last Stand*, and the former has been in the mix since 2000. "Bryan is in many ways the author of the tone of the *X-Men* franchise, but he also introduced all of us to the idea that a comic-book movie could be as grounded and self-serious as the first *X-Men* was," Parker enthuses. "He showed a remarkable instinct for tone and the need for grounding these stories. I think that was particularly important for us in this one, because in some ways the character of Apocalypse is an almost more galactic-type character."

"He's been such an amazing steward of the movies," he continues. "And the continuity of having Simon as the chief storyteller, [he's] known these characters intimately for decades, it's been critical

Rose Byrne returns as Moira MacTaggart, having taken a break in *DOFP*.



Nicholas Hoult is also back as Henry 'Hank' McCoy.



MUTANT REPORT CARDS FROM NEGASONIC TEENAGE WARHEAD

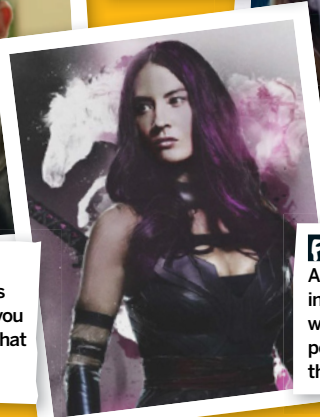
JEAN GREY

I hear it can be hard for people whose powers aren't visual to stand out. Don't feel too bad.



PSYLOCKE

Apparently people in the Eighties felt it was important to let people know it was the Eighties.



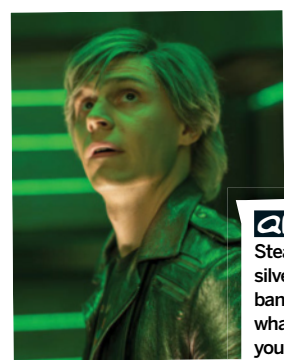
CYCLOPS

Were the red shades supposed to make you look edgy? That's what you get for being a try-hard.



NIGHTCRAWLER

Did you settle on the emo fringe before or after you got the tattoos?



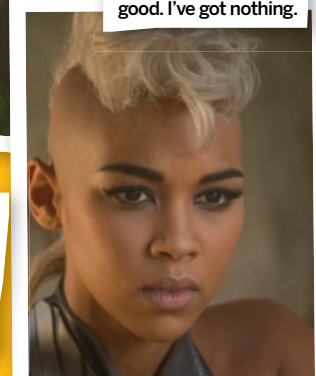
QUICKSILVER

Steampunk goggles, silver jacket, silver hair, band tee shirt... so what? You're saying you're interesting?



STORM

Okay, that mohawk is good. I've got nothing.



X-MEN: APOCALYPSE

Come The Apocalypse



Kodi Smit-McPhee enters the X-verse as a young Kurt Wagner/Nightcrawler.



in helping to chart the character-rich journeys that are key to the X-Men."

"Yeah, these *X-Men* movies are a nightmare to write!" laughs Kinberg. "You could easily end up with a 120-page script just about Storm or Erik or Charles or Raven. So to have 120 pages in which you've got to tell 10-, 12-, 15-character stories is always a real challenge, and all of their stories need to inform and infuse each other and they all have to be part of a not just larger narrative, but a larger theme. So writing these movies gives me great joy, because I love the characters, and when it starts to come together it's like that moment when you're putting a puzzle together. But it's complicated, and on top of that it's not like I can short-change these characters. I've got Michael Fassbender, James McAvoy, Jennifer Lawrence, Oscar Isaac, Nicholas Hoult, Tye Sheridan – lead actors! So I just try real hard to give them good stuff to do. I don't have any secrets!"

It's not too much of a leap to assume that those challenges are what keeps this creative team coming back, but Singer tells us that his love for the *X-Men* characters remains as uncomplicated as it was when he read the comics as a kid. "It's the central theme," Singer tells us. "I think it's the fact that I grew up Jewish living in a Catholic neighbourhood. I was adopted, I was an only child, I had sexuality issues, I had a lot of things going on. I was very much an outcast in high

school. I got terrible grades, and I did not find myself identifiable, social, attractive or anything. And so in my younger years, I felt if I could have only found a place like Charles Xavier's mansion I would hitchhike up there in a heartbeat.

"There's something about the themes of tolerance and feeling like an outcast in living in a world that doesn't understand you necessarily or doesn't fully understand you," Singer explains, "I love juggling all the characters, I love the themes, and there's depth to them. This is not a light comic-book movie; this is a film that happens to take place in a comic universe. And there's no shortage of action or global destruction or all that shit that the audience expects, but to me it will always be a film. Myself and my cast take their characters very, very seriously."

So while this may be the end of a trilogy, and quite possibly the end of the world, Singer is never going to be far away from the *X-Men* movies, even with *20,000 Leagues Under The Sea* next on his slate. "Yeah, I would like to make another film," he tells us. "I've been in it so long, whether it's consulting, producing or even directing; I saw a rough cut of *Deadpool* and I gave some thoughts, I saw a rough cut of *The Wolverine* movies, I always want to remain in somehow. I do not see myself abandoning the franchise." ☞

X-Men: Apocalypse will be released in cinemas on 18 May.



“TO APOCALYPSE, IT’S ALL ONE GIANT, CORRUPT, LOST, MISGUIDED CIVILISATION THAT NEEDS TO BE CLEANSED”
BRYAN SINGER

CALCULATING THE X

FROM KICK-STARTING THE SUPERHERO TREND TO FORMING A LEGACY, WE LOOK AT THE NUMBERS

X-MEN ACADEMY AWARD WINNERS/NOMINATIONS

Halle Berry (Storm)

🏆 **1 Best Actress win** (Monster's Ball)

Jennifer Lawrence (Mystique)

🏆 **1 Best Actress win** (Silver Linings Playbook)

🏆 **2 Best Actress nominations** (Winter's Bone, Joy)

🏆 **1 Best Supporting Actress nomination** (Joy)

Anna Paquin (Rogue)

🏆 **1 Best Supporting Actress win**

(The Piano)

Michael Fassbender (Magneto)

🏆 **1 Best Actor nomination** (Steve Jobs)

🏆 **1 Best Supporting Actor**

nomination (12 Years A Slave)

Ellen Page (Kitty Pryde)

🏆 **1 Best Actress nomination** (Juno)

Hugh Jackman (Wolverine)

🏆 **1 Best Actor nomination** (Les Misérables)

Ian McKellen (Magneto)

🏆 **1 Best Actor nomination** (Gods And Monsters)

🏆 **1 Best Supporting Actor nomination**

(The Lord Of The Rings: The Fellowship Of The Rings)

AVERAGE
FILM RATING
74%

APOCALYPSE

PLAYED BY: Oscar Isaac

ALIAS: En Sabah Nur

FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE:

X-Factor #5 (July 1986) cameo, X-Factor #6 (August 1986) full appearance

TEAM AFFILIATIONS: Four Horsemen, Dark Riders, Clan Akkaba, Alliance Of Evil, SHIELD

ABILITIES: Immortality, mass manipulation, energy manipulation, technopathy, telekinesis, telepathy

FILM STATS



TOTAL
EARNINGS*

\$3,799,165,964

X-MEN APOCALYPSE

Come The Apocalypse

COMIC BOOK CHARACTER DATA

Magneto

PLAYED BY: Ian McKellen, Bill Milner, Michael Fassbender
ALIAS: Max Eisenhardt/Erik Lehnsherr
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *The X-Men* #1 (September 1963)
ABILITIES: Magnetism manipulation, flight through magnetic fields, helmet shields against telepathic attacks



Professor X

PLAYED BY: Patrick Stewart, Lawrence Belcher, James McAvoy
ALIAS: Charles Xavier
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *The X-Men* #1 (September 1963)
ABILITIES: Telepathy, mind reading, memory manipulation, mind control, astral projection



Mystique

PLAYED BY: Rebecca Romijn, Lily Morgan, Jennifer Lawrence
ALIAS: Raven Darkhölme
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *Ms Marvel* #17 (June 1978)
ABILITIES: Shapeshifting, superhuman agility and reflexes, agelessness, accelerated healing



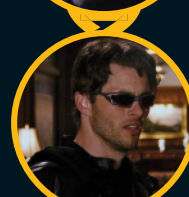
Storm

PLAYED BY: Halle Berry, April Elleston-Enahoro, Alexandra Shipp
ALIAS: Ororo Munroe
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 (May 1975)
ABILITIES: Weather manipulation, flight, ecological empathy



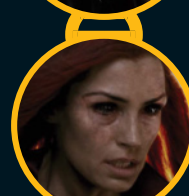
Cyclops

PLAYED BY: James Marsden, Tim Pocock, Tye Sheridan
ALIAS: Scott Summers
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *The X-Men* #1 (September 1963)
ABILITIES: Optic force blasts, spatial awareness



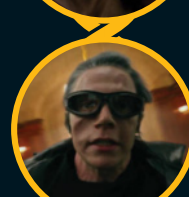
Jean Grey

PLAYED BY: Famke Janssen, Haley Ramm, Sophie Turner
ALIAS: Jean Grey-Summers
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *The X-Men* #1 (September 1963)
ABILITIES: Telekinesis, telepathy



Quicksilver

PLAYED BY: Evan Peters
ALIAS: Pietro Django Maximoff
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *Uncanny X-Men* #304 (March 1964)
ABILITIES: Superhuman speed and reflexes



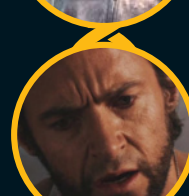
Nightcrawler

PLAYED BY: Alan Cumming, Kodi Smit-McPhee
ALIAS: Kurt Wagner
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *Giant-Size X-Men* #1 (May 1975)
ABILITIES: Expert fencer, superhuman agility, dexterity, coordination, reflexes and balance, enhanced flexibility, speed and night vision, teleportation, ability to stick to walls and blend into shadows



Wolverine

PLAYED BY: Hugh Jackman, Troye Sivan
ALIAS: James 'Logan' Howlett
FIRST COMIC APPEARANCE: *The Incredible Hulk* #181 (November 1974)
ABILITIES: Regenerative healing, adamantium-plated skeleton and retractable claws, superhuman senses and reflexes, extended life



DEATH

DEATH (11th CENTURY INCARNATION) // ARCHANGEL // CALIBAN
 WOLVERINE // GAMBIT // PSYLOCKE
 SAMARA JAYEED // BANSHEE
 DAKEN // GRIMREAPER // SENTRY

X-Men Origins: Wolverine (2009)
 BUDGET: \$150 million DOMESTIC: \$179,883,157
 WORLDWIDE: \$373,062,864 RUNNING TIME: 107 minutes
 ROTTEN TOMATOES RATING: 38%

X-Men: First Class (2011)
 BUDGET: \$160 million DOMESTIC: \$146,408,305
 WORLDWIDE: \$353,624,124 RUNNING TIME: 132 minutes
 ROTTEN TOMATOES RATING: 87%

The Wolverine (2013)
 BUDGET: \$120 million DOMESTIC: \$132,556,852
 WORLDWIDE: \$414,828,246 RUNNING TIME: 136 minutes
 ROTTEN TOMATOES RATING: 70%

X-Men: Days of Future Past (2014)
 BUDGET: \$200 million DOMESTIC: \$233,921,534
 WORLDWIDE: \$747,862,775 RUNNING TIME: 158 minutes
 ROTTEN TOMATOES RATING: 91%

TOTAL
RUNNING TIME
1013
MINS

MUTATION:
IT IS THE KEY TO
OUR EVOLUTION
PROFESSOR CHARLES XAVIER

*WORLDWIDE
 **EARN'T SO FAR

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IT'S ABOUT TIME

THE MAD HATTER, THE WHITE RABBIT AND ALICE ARE BACK IN ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS. WE TALK TO DIRECTOR JAMES BOBIN AND PRODUCER SUZANNE TODD ABOUT WHAT'S TO COME IN UNDERLAND AS THINGS GET CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

TIME IS A STRANGE THING. IT NEVER STOPS, AND YET WE ALSO DON'T SEEM TO HAVE ENOUGH OF IT. IT CAN'T BE TOUCHED, BUT IT CAN BE FELT. IT CAN

easily be measured, but some believe that it doesn't exist. It crawls by at a snail's pace if you don't use it wisely, but whooshes past when you're least expecting it, and when time is the only thing you need. It's mind-boggling to think about, but nothing would make sense without it. The second story in Disney's *Alice In Wonderland* saga, *Alice Through The Looking Glass*, is all about time, but not as you think you know it.

"When I came on board this project, there was an idea already that Alice travelled through time," says director James Bobin. "I came up with the idea that if you travelled through time in Underland, you would basically have to ask permission from the person called Time. The character itself was Lewis Carroll's idea: in the first book, when Alice first meets the Mad Hatter at the tea party,

he says to her, 'I've been stuck in this tea party since last March when Time and I quarrelled.' I thought, 'That's a good idea, that means Time is a person in Underland. And therefore if you created a character called Time, he would be in charge of the time; he *is* the personification of time, and therefore if you wanted to travel through time, you would have to ask his permission. I thought that was a very Alice-y thing: to have to ask somebody to borrow something to travel through time, and for him to say no, but for her to be so determined that she went anyway.'

"The movie focuses on this concept for all of us with time; how we spend it or how we waste it," says producer Suzanne Todd. "It seems to get easier and easier to spend the minutes and hours of our day not necessarily paying attention to how you're spending them. It grows ever more easy with endless entertainment and Buzzfeed quizzes. You spend your time without actually intentionally spending that time. You don't wake up in the morning and ⤵



ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

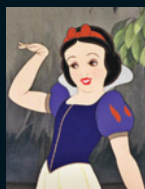
It's About Time

“ALICE HAS BEEN GONE LONGER THAN SHE ANTICIPATED, AND THINGS HAVE CHANGED”
SUZANNE TODD

DISNEY THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

Take a trip into the future with the House of Mouse's hall of fame...

SNOW WHITE (SNOW WHITE AND THE SEVEN DWARFS)



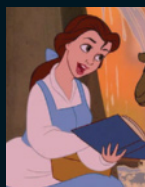
With a two-year residency at Las Vegas' Caesar's Palace, she does six shows a week with her dancing critters.

HERCULES (HERCULES)

Started a promising athletic career, but retired early after his stressful ordeal with SteroidGate during the 393AD Olympics.



BELLE (BEAUTY AND THE BEAST)



Now a popular YA author with 'BEASTiality', an eight-part saga about a girl who falls in love with a beast.

ARIEL (THE LITTLE MERMAID)

Caught by a fishing vessel in the Atlantic Ocean, and is currently being displayed in the American Museum of Natural History.



ALADDIN (ALADDIN)



Didn't become sultan, but rules Agrabah anyway because his carpet business brought him great riches.



Helena Bonham Carter is back as the Red Queen.



Alice's world has changed greatly in the years since the events of the first film.



Johnny Depp's Mad Hatter finds himself in a bit of a bind.



ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS

It's About Time

➤go, 'Okay, I want to waste two hours today surfing Facebook!' and yet I think a lot of the time that's what ends up happening."

Funnily enough, this is also where Alice finds herself. "We start off in a place where Alice is coming back from that journey that she left for at the end of the first movie," Todd explains. "She's been gone longer that she anticipated, and things have changed. She really has to take a look at time and that idea of what's the most important way you want to spend your time with your loved ones and the people who are important to you. She's at that point in her life in her 20s where she needs to refocus on that. It's such a common thing in that stage of your life, because you're trying to build your career, you're trying to build your life, and you're going through all kinds of changes as a young adult, and that idea that time is precious doesn't show up in your 20s."

In the role of Time is *Borat* star Sacha Baron Cohen. Even with Tim Burton stepping down from the director's chair in favour of producing, we'll still get to see a long-time director/actor duo in action with *Alice Through The Looking Glass*; Bobin and Baron Cohen have known each other and been working together for almost 20 years.

"I had Sacha in mind from the very beginning," says Bobin, "because the character I knew wouldn't be a straight-up bad guy; he had to have some complex... he's kind of an antagonist, but not really. I wanted people to like this guy, even though he's initially a buffoon, but Sacha's very good at playing that confident idiot trope, and so I knew he would be able to make him likeable. He is very strong and powerful; he *is* time. He has complete control over time, but at the same time I like the idea that this guy is a powerful but lonely demigod. He has spent too much time by himself and has need of company, and therefore made the terrible mistake of making friends with the Red Queen, which I thought would be fun too."

Baron Cohen is famous for the plethora of characters that he has brought to life, from the utterly hilarious in *Borat* to the lawless downtrodden in *Les Misérables*, so he was the perfect choice to help develop the character. "From when we first started determining what the character would look like, what they would wear, how he would speak and how he would walk, Sacha has such a great encyclopaedia, having created so many of these before," says Bobin. "Obviously he doesn't want to replay anything he had already done, and it's very specific for him, the way those things inform the way he's going to play the character. It was a really fun process."

Returning to the franchise is costume designer Colleen Atwood, who won an Academy Award for her work on *Alice In Wonderland*. "She's just fantastically talented," says Bobin. "She was a big part of that process, working with Sacha, figuring out how he was going to pull it off. Interestingly, some of the things that he wanted to do with the costume were almost too physically prohibitive. It would be things like he wouldn't be able to move his arms or walk, and she had to take that into consideration with all the fantastical ideas. You'd realised he would actually have to function on the day!"

AS WELL AS TIME, ALICE THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS IS BRINGING IN A WHOLE HOST OF NEW CHARACTERS, WITH A STAR-STUDDED CAST TO

match. Joining the likes of Mia Wasikowska, Johnny Depp and Anne Hathaway are Richard Armitage, Hattie Morahan, Andrew Scott and Rhys Ifans as Zanik Hightopp, the Mad Hatter's father. "It's one of the great joys of this job," confesses Bobin. "I was incredibly excited that everyone wanted to come back and

I WANTED TO BRING A MORE COMEDIC TOUCH TO IT, TO A DEGREE
JAMES BOBIN

do it again, and that was thrilling, because they are fantastic and work together so well, these characters are so brilliant... You inherit these characters with the actors knowing them so well, and at the same time we can move forward with the story. The film is basically the story of what happened next, and also how they got to where they were in the first film."

Bobin was already at work at Disney on *The Muppets* when he heard about plans to expand Tim Burton's *Alice In Wonderland* and bring out a sequel. He quickly became eager to get involved. "I expressed a deep interest in it because I'm English, and so for me... it's an iconic book in your life, part of your DNA," he tells us. "I've always loved both books, and I really liked the world that Tim created, so I was excited about the idea of pulling together my take on Alice and who I feel she is, and adding to Tim's version he put together in 2010, so it was really just a thing I was excited about. I pitched them my idea, and they liked it, so it came from that – it was very straightforward! It was one of those great moments where things work out – it was a great thing."

With the change of director came a change in tone. Burton has always been known for his dark fairy-tale twists, which was reflected in *Alice In Wonderland*. Bobin has more of a cheeky, satirical style, what with his heavy involvement with not only *The Muppets*, but the likes of *Flight Of The Concords* and *Da Ali G Show*. Naturally, *Alice Through The Looking Glass* is taking a more comedic turn.

"It's a little bit of a lighter world," explains Todd. "Tim has a very specific take that was so glorious in the first movie, and which obviously so many people loved. In this one it feels a little bit different. We've built more sets. It's not all completely computer generated like in the first one. And there's comedy! James is sort of two ends of the spectrum; on one end he considers himself a historian and he loves history and he loves everything to be rooted in historical fact, and [then he also] comes from comedy. So it's a lighter take of that work that Tim created."

"Tim's version... was about Alice coming back after she'd forgotten where she had been in the first place. This film is very much a sequel and a prequel to that idea in a way," Bobin tells us. "Obviously, Tim has a very unique and fantastic look: the first film was utterly beautiful, so I was very keen to maintain the feel of the place. But this story really takes place in a different geographical location and a different time period in many cases, so that gave us a certain license to change bits and pieces where appropriate – keeping it within the universe, but adding our own feel to it."

Unsurprisingly, Bobin was keen to inject his background in comedy into the film. "I wanted to bring a more comedic touch to it, to a degree," he tells us. "Just because I know Lewis Carroll himself was very much considered at the time to be a satirist, if you like. The books satirised Victorian society, and I think in an interesting way he's one of those foundations of English humour."

"If you look at Lewis Carroll and his absurd surrealism, that's a very singular line you can follow through, like *The Goon Show* in the Fifties all the way through to *Monty Python* in the Seventies. That's a very English sense of humour: the absurdity of the world and language, and clever use of language, and I wanted to bring that to it."

By comparison to the time in which the original story was told, not only has language evolved, but the way in which we consume humour has as well. "[It was difficult because] it's Victorian, so you have to make it accessible; you don't want to make it too old-fashioned or unapproachable. It needs to be ➤



It wouldn't be *Wonderland* if there weren't strange goings-on.



JAMES BOBIN'S FINEST FLIGHTS OF FANTASY Step into the world of Bobin and experience madness like never before...

LIFE'S A HAPPY SONG (THE MUPPETS)

The song itself (written by Bret McKenzie) is great alone, but when combined with the film's zany opening sequence it creates something truly magical.



MAN OR MUPPET (THE MUPPETS)

Another (Oscar-winning) McKenzie classic made even weirder and even more magical by Bobin's direction. The film quickly turns into a power ballad music video, and it's glorious.



HIPHOPOPOTAMUS VS RHYMENOCEROS (FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS)

Directed and co-written by Bobin, Bret and Jemaine break it down for some muggers in this rap sequence. There ain't no party like my Nana's tea party.



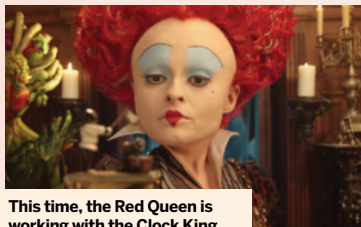
BOWIE'S IN SPACE (FLIGHT OF THE CONCHORDS)

Flight Of The Conchords showed the late singer some love in the episode 'Bowie'. It contains the lyrics, 'Do you use your pointy nipples as telescopic antennae?'



DA ALI G SHOW

When it first aired, there was nothing quite like *Da Ali G Show*. It was outrageous and completely mad, and was one of the first times Bobin and Sacha Baron Cohen worked together.



This time, the Red Queen is working with the Clock King.

➤ recognisable, but at the same time using words is one of the most important things to me in the world. I think comedy reflects that: literally the placement of words in a sentence can make something funny or not, and I think that's a very interesting area that he played with hugely, and I wanted to play with that too."

It's unbelievable to think that Alice, this young girl from a couple of children's books that were published back in the mid-19th century, has had such an influence on popular culture. Now, just over 150 years later, Alice is one of the most adapted literary characters of all time. Tim Burton's *Alice In Wonderland*

went the same way as Lewis Carroll's books; Todd herself admits that the crew didn't expect it to do nearly as well as it did. Though it received a mixed reception from critics, it managed to rake in over a \$1 billion worldwide. At the time of writing, it's the 22nd highest grossing film of all time. People love Alice's adventures in Wonderland, but what is it that makes this story – and Alice – such a crowd-pleaser?

EVER SINCE SHE FIRST CAME OUT, PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CHARMED BY THE WORLD AND CHARMED BY HER, AND WHAT'S INCREDIBLE IS THAT HASN'T faded through time," says Bobin. "The relevance of her character and questioning of the things around her... She puts her foot down when necessary. She's very appealing. People respond to strong characters, and what's interesting about her is that because she's a woman, that is unusual – even today."

As a filmmaker, this is something that Bobin rails against. "It's a terrible

state of affairs, but there aren't that many characters that are leads or strong characters that are women or girls, so it's such a nice thing for women to identify with, but for men too. It's an amazing achievement to create this crazy world. It's 150 years old and still going strong, which is an amazing testament to the strength of the idea and the quality of the writing."

One of the things that makes the story of *Alice In Wonderland* so timeless is Carroll's admittance of women's place in society, and how it was about to change. He was writing for a modern world as an individual long before his time. "Alice really was a woman who represents the future in some ways," says Bobin. "Alice Liddell's generation – who was the real Alice – she was born in the decade when Emmeline Pankhurst, who came to be leader of the Suffragettes, was born."

"Alice's generation was very much the one that changed the world," the director adds, "and I think that Lewis Carroll had great foresight to work this out. Alice

was a very unusual character at the time, of course: this very clever, unruly girl who knew what she wanted and how to get what she wanted, and that's a very interesting idea: that she wouldn't suffer fools gladly. That was a very unusual idea for women at the time, who were generally expected to sit in the corner quietly and do some sewing. It was nice to have Carroll create this amazing female character."

What *Alice In Wonderland* brings to the public is a somehow relatable tale. While the concept might not immediately seem as if it connects to everyone, Alice as a character links the story to the everyman. "Some people watch the first movie and feel like Wonderland and Underland are real places," says Todd, "and some people watch it and feel like it all exists in Alice's subconscious. What I hear a lot from fans is that it feels relatable. It sounds odd because it's so bizarre and in some ways deconstructed, but there's something about the fact that Alice feels like an outsider. There's something about the fantastical nature of the other characters that surround her as either possible components of her subconscious, or just other archetypes that are interesting to people that really resonate."

Whatever the magic is that the world of Wonderland and its characters create, it is certain to have an impact. "It's amazing how that idea speaks to people: how they relate to those characters because something feels familiar to them," comments Todd, having relayed the story of meeting a man randomly with a tattoo of their version of the Mad Hatter, who had nothing but love for the character and how he related to his creativity.

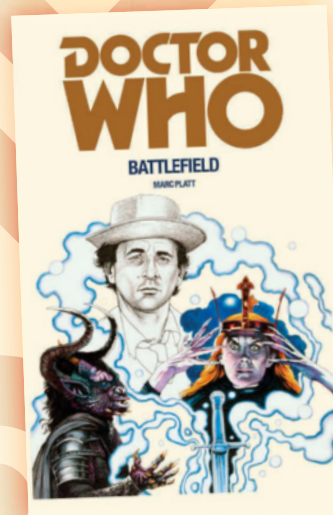
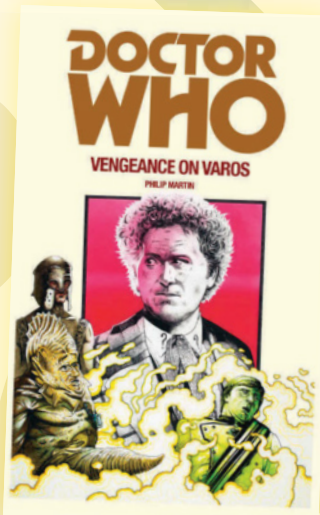
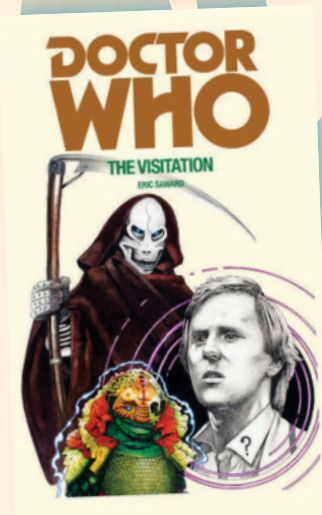
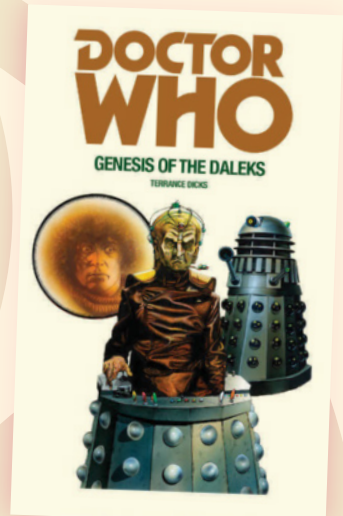
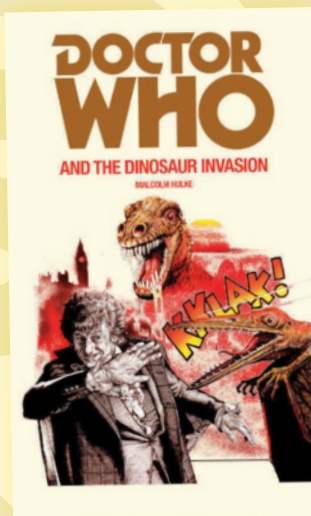
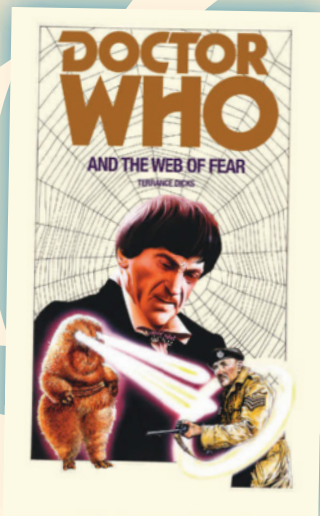
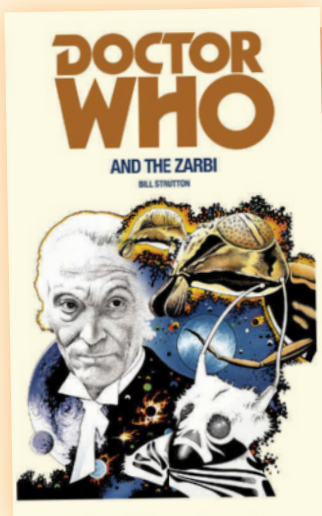
Whoever you connect with, *Alice Through The Looking Glass* is ready to take on its forebear and leave its mark. ✨

Alice Through The Looking Glass will be released in cinemas on 27 May.

PEOPLE HAVE BEEN CHARMED BY ALICE, AND WHAT'S INCREDIBLE IS THAT HASN'T FADED THROUGH TIME
JAMES BOBIN



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STAR TREK

*50 YEARS OF BOLDLY GOING: **PART 1***

TRIP

THIS YEAR, WE CELEBRATE HALF A CENTURY OF GENE RODENBERRY'S FANTASTIC VISION COMING TO FRUITION. IN THE RUN-UP TO OUR ANNIVERSARY SPECIAL, WE CHART THE SERIES' INCREDIBLE JOURNEY...

WORDS EDWARD GROSS

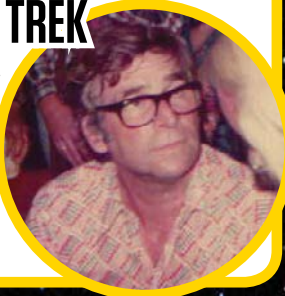
STAR TREK'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY YEAR WILL BE MARKED IN JULY BY THE ARRIVAL OF 13TH FEATURE FILM *STAR TREK BEYOND*, AND WITH A BRAND NEW LIVE-ACTION TELEVISION SERIES (THE FIFTH SINCE THE ORIGINAL) SET TO DEBUT IN

January of next year. All in all, the final frontier is a busy place. What follows is a look back at the history of the saga, from its creation to one step beyond...

1963

GENE RODDENBERRY CREATES STAR TREK

"At the time," said pilot-and-police-officer-turned-writer Roddenberry, "I was tired of writing about what I considered to be nothing. *Star Trek* was formulated to change that."



1964

THE FIRST PILOT, 'THE CAGE', IS PRODUCED

Introducing the Enterprise, Leonard Nimoy as Spock and Jeffrey Hunter as Christopher Pike, it is ultimately rejected by NBC. Opines director Robert Butler, "'The Cage' showcased solid, good and fascinating science fiction disciplines, but I thought it was a little obscure. The story was somewhat remote. Apparently the network at its level was feeling exactly as I did."

1965

SECOND PILOT, 'WHERE NO MAN HAS GONE BEFORE', IS PRODUCED

Believing in the concept, NBC orders a second pilot, which has William Shatner debut as Captain James Kirk. "The biggest factor in selling the pilot was that it ended up with a hell of a fistfight," says Roddenberry. "Once we got *Star Trek* on the air, we began infiltrating a few of our ideas the fans have all celebrated."



1966-67

SEASON ONE

The show premieres on 8 September 1966, with Shatner and Nimoy joined by the rest of the classic cast. Cast and crew were united in their passion to create the genre's first truly adult episodic series. "The show was meaningful for many people," reflects story editor John DF Black. "On the night of the first shoot, I left the office and found Billy Shatner leaning against my car. I said, 'How's it going, Billy?' He looked at me and said, 'It's just so damned important to us.' And I said, 'Yeah, we've got a hit.' That's what you say to everybody when it's in the fan and you don't know what's going to happen next, particularly to actors who are so vulnerable. And he said, 'I hope so,' and walked away. The sense I had was that we were all doing the best we could, and we were giving it everything we had."



1967-68

SEASON TWO

Star Trek moves from strength to strength, also adding Walter Koenig's Chekov to the cast. However, low ratings leave the network determined to cancel at the end of the season, but a campaign from the fans is launched. According to author Jacqueline Lichtenberg, the reaction among Trekkers is based on knowledge of the television business model: if there weren't a full three seasons worth of shows, there would be no syndicated re-runs. *Star Trek* would have been lost forever. "This was a historic breakthrough," she says. "It went from, 'You just don't understand!' to, 'You and what army?!'" The result? A rumoured 1 million letters and the show's renewal.



1968-69

SEASON THREE

Paramount acquires Desilu, and cuts the show's budget despite cast salary escalations ("We were reduced to what I call a radio show," says associate producer Robert L. Justman), and Roddenberry departs, to be replaced by Fred Freiberger. Writer Margaret Armen sums up the change in producers succinctly: "Fred had been signed to produce and was being briefed. He watched an episode with me, smoking a big cigar, and said, 'Oh, I get it. Tits in space.'" The series is cancelled at the conclusion of its third season.



Starbackground © Matt Bennett



1973-74

THE ANIMATED SERIES

Thanks to ratings of the reruns and the growing fan movement, Paramount and NBC air *Star Trek: The Animated Series*, many episodes of which are written by veterans of the live-action show. The cast (except Walter Koenig) provide the voices to their characters.



1978

THE FIRST MOTION PICTURE IS ANNOUNCED

Paramount announces it will produce *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* instead. The entire cast is brought aboard, with Roddenberry as producer, Harold Livingston as screenwriter, Alan Dean Foster as the author of the story and Robert Wise as director.

Foster says, "Obviously, the real reason the *Star Trek* film finally got the go-ahead was because of *Star Wars* and *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. After that, everybody started running around like crazy. After being told, 'Yes, we're doing a series; no, we're doing a movie; yes, we're doing a movie,' everybody hears money. Everyone ran around trying to find something so that they could get started right away with budgeting and casting."

"I LIKE IT. I DON'T THINK IT'S EVERYTHING I HOPED IT'D BE"

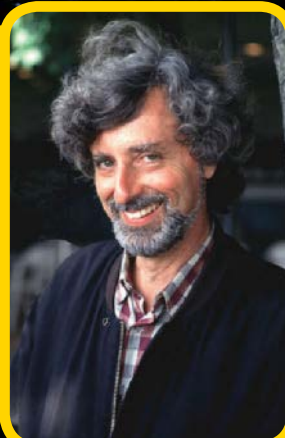
ROBERT WISE



1978

BOLDLY GOING

Numerous film pitches are heard and rejected by the studio, the writers including original series story editor John DF Black and authors Harlan Ellison and Robert Silverberg. One attempt, *Planet Of The Titans*, seems likely to go forward. Intended director Philip Kaufman says, "It was an adventure through a black hole into the future and the past, and there were more relationships developed beyond just the crew." Ultimately the project is abandoned.



© Gorup de Besarez

1977

PHASE II

Paramount develops a show called *Star Trek II* (which came to be known as *Star Trek Phase II* years later) as its cornerstone. The original cast is back with the exception of Nimoy, three new characters added, over a dozen scripts written, with Gene Roddenberry overseeing it all. Says then Paramount chairman and CEO Barry Diller, "We'd done a number of treatments and scripts, and every time we'd say, 'This isn't good enough.' If we had just gone forward and done it, we might have done it quite well. We went to Gene Roddenberry and said, 'Look, you're the person who understands *Star Trek*. We don't. But what we should probably do is return to the original context, a television series.'"



1979

STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE

In December, ten years after the cancellation of the original series, *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* reaches theatres. With a budget of \$44 million, it is one of the most expensive movies of all time, and receives a mixed critical reception, but still turns a profit. "Do I like the film?" director Robert Wise asks rhetorically. "I like it. I don't think it's everything I hoped it'd be." Roddenberry adds, "My attitude on the movie is this: while the film failed in a number of areas I would have liked it to have succeeded, it was a successful adaptation of the television story to the screen. We did what we could under the time, conditions and circumstances."

1980

SEQUEL TROUBLE

Roddenberry hands in a treatment for a sequel that would involve Klingons, time travel and President John F Kennedy not being assassinated, which has such disastrous results. "The sequel story is much more intra-crew, intra-character," he said. "It has many more of the difficult decisions that Kirk always had in the TV episodes, decisions about morality and ideals. It's good *Star Trek*." The studio disagreed, rejecting it and kicking him 'upstairs' to a creative consultant role.

1981

ENTER HARVE BENNETT

Paramount gives *Star Trek* to the TV division to produce more economically, Harve Bennett is brought on as executive producer, with Robert Sallin serving as producer and Nicholas Meyer (who had directed 1979's *Time After Time*) coming aboard as director and uncredited co-writer of the screenplay for the second feature film.



1982

STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN

With a budget of \$13 million, it's the film that fans have been waiting for. Bringing back Ricardo Montalban from the original series episode 'Space Seed' as Khan Noonien Singh, the result is a riveting exploration of character, revenge and adventure in one of *Star Trek*'s most grounded stories, ending in Spock's death. Sallin gives Meyer a lot of the credit for Khan, because he had taken various unsuccessful drafts of the script and somehow pulled it together: "It was his pulling together components. He shaped it, he did the whole thing in, like, 10 or 12 days. If we hadn't stumbled on to him, I don't know what we would have done."



1984

STAR TREK III: THE SEARCH FOR SPOCK

The budget is \$16 million, and it's a giant box-office success as Leonard Nimoy slips into the director's chair. Kirk and company must deal with Klingons as they attempt to retrieve Spock's body from the so-called Genesis Planet so that it can be joined with his consciousness, which is housed in McCoy's mind. Muses Nimoy, "I felt the film was about camaraderie; about commitment to friendship and loyalty among a band of people."

1988

STAR TREK IV: THE VOYAGE HOME

'The one with the whales' turns out to be – until the 2009 reboot film from JJ Abrams – the most successful film in the franchise, as Kirk and company come to 20th century Earth to retrieve a pair of humpback whales to save the future. Highlights include wonderful cast interactions and a light touch by returning director Nimoy. Comments DeForest Kelley, "I always felt from the very beginning that the core of *Star Trek* was the family. It was always this group of people that were working in this bizarre type world together. That's what made the show successful."



1989

STAR TREK V: THE FINAL FRONTIER

The Enterprise finally meets God, and the results – with William Shatner serving as director – are not that successful, becoming the lowest grossing film in the series. It also marks Harve Bennett's final effort as producer. "It took me a while to take another look at *Star Trek V*," admits Shatner. "I think I learned a great deal directing a multi-million-dollar picture like that. It was an enormous responsibility to be in control of that much money, and I hadn't spent the money wisely. I'd blown it in the first half and had nothing in the second."



1990

STAR TREK: THE ACADEMY YEARS

This proposed prequel to the original series would have told of the first encounter between Kirk, Spock and McCoy at Starfleet Academy. Bennett would have served as producer/director with *Star Trek V*'s David Loughery writing the screenplay. In the end, the studio decided to go with a sixth film.

1991

STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY

For the final voyage of the original crew, Meyer returns to serve as director in a Cold War allegory that sees Kirk and McCoy framed for the execution of the Klingon chancellor. Critically, and commercially, it's a return to form. "There was a sense that this was it," notes producer Ralph Winter, "so there was that bittersweet feeling. We were clawing at the end of that genre of film about space battles with these great galleons in space fighting. But it seemed clear to me that we weren't going to be able to compete with the fast-moving TIE Fighters of *Star Wars* and the need for bigger action. *Star Trek* would need to be seriously reinvented."



TO BE BOLDLY CONTINUED....



To learn more about the history of *Star Trek*, pre-order *The Fifty-Year Mission: The First 25 Years* by Edward Gross and Mark A. Altman, out 28 June, from Amazon.



GHIBLI GHOST STORY

WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE COULD WELL BE STUDIO GHIBLI'S LAST FILM. WE SPOKE TO THE DIRECTOR ABOUT CAPPING OFF A LEGACY...

WORDS MATTHEW TURNER

OUT THIS MONTH, CHARMING CHILDREN'S GHOST STORY WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE IS SET TO BE THE FINAL FILM FROM JAPANESE ANIMATION HOUSE

Studio Ghibli, following the recent official retirements of Ghibli guru Hayao Miyazaki and studio co-founder Isao Takahata. We spoke to the film's director, Hiromasa Yonebayashi about the genesis of *Marnie*, his personal relationship with Miyazaki and the difficulties of animating water.

Based on a British ghost story by author Joan G Robinson, *When Marnie Was There* centres on tomboy-ish Anna (voiced by Sara Takatsuki, and by Hailee Steinfeld in the forthcoming English-language version), a lonely teenager who moves to the country on medical advice following an asthma attack. Left to her own devices, Anna spends most of her free time drawing, but one day she explores a tumbledown mansion across the marshland where she meets Marnie (voiced by Kasumi Arimura and Kiernan Shipka – *Mad Men*'s Sally Draper – on the dubbed version), a beautiful blonde girl who may or may not exist.

In keeping with several previous Studio Ghibli films, including Yonebayashi's 2010 debut *Arrietty* (adapted from Mary Norton's *The Borrowers*), *When Marnie Was There* is based on a work of English children's classic literature, appearing alongside the likes of *Winnie The Pooh*, *Swallows And Amazons* and *Heidi* on a published list of Miyazaki's favourite children's books.

So why this book in particular? Yonebayashi explains: "I was given this book by [Studio Ghibli general manager Toshio Suzuki], and it's actually Miyazaki's favourite

children's book as well. I read it, and I found it really absorbing and moving, but I thought it would be so difficult to visualise, because most of the book was the characters' internal dialogue. So at one point I said to Suzuki, 'No, I can't do it', but then I started getting various ideas, such as creating the scene where Marnie and Anna are dancing together, or coming up with the setting and the idea that Anna actually draws, none of which are in the original book. And I thought that would make a great film."

The film transposes the action of the story from England to Japan, but the characters maintain their original look, which perhaps explains why Marnie bears a slight resemblance to Disney's lead in *Alice In Wonderland*, with her blonde hair, blue eyes and a fondness for blue-and-white dresses. So was Alice a conscious model for the character? Not according to Yonebayashi: "No, there was no model for the character, but in the original novel, there is an illustration of Marnie and she had long hair and blue eyes, so we stuck with that. Actually, when you're animating a character, it is difficult to create a girl with blonde hair, but I thought I would like the challenge, so I accepted the challenge."

It is, of course, entirely possible that Disney's Alice influenced the original illustration, but either way, that's not the only coincidence attached to the book as the character also shares her name with a classic Alfred Hitchcock heroine. Yonebayashi elaborates: "When the original novel was written, Hitchcock's film was actually released at around the same time, but the film ended up being ahead of the



When Marnie Was There takes the originally English story to Japan.

"I READ IT AND I FOUND IT REALLY ABSORBING AND MOVING"

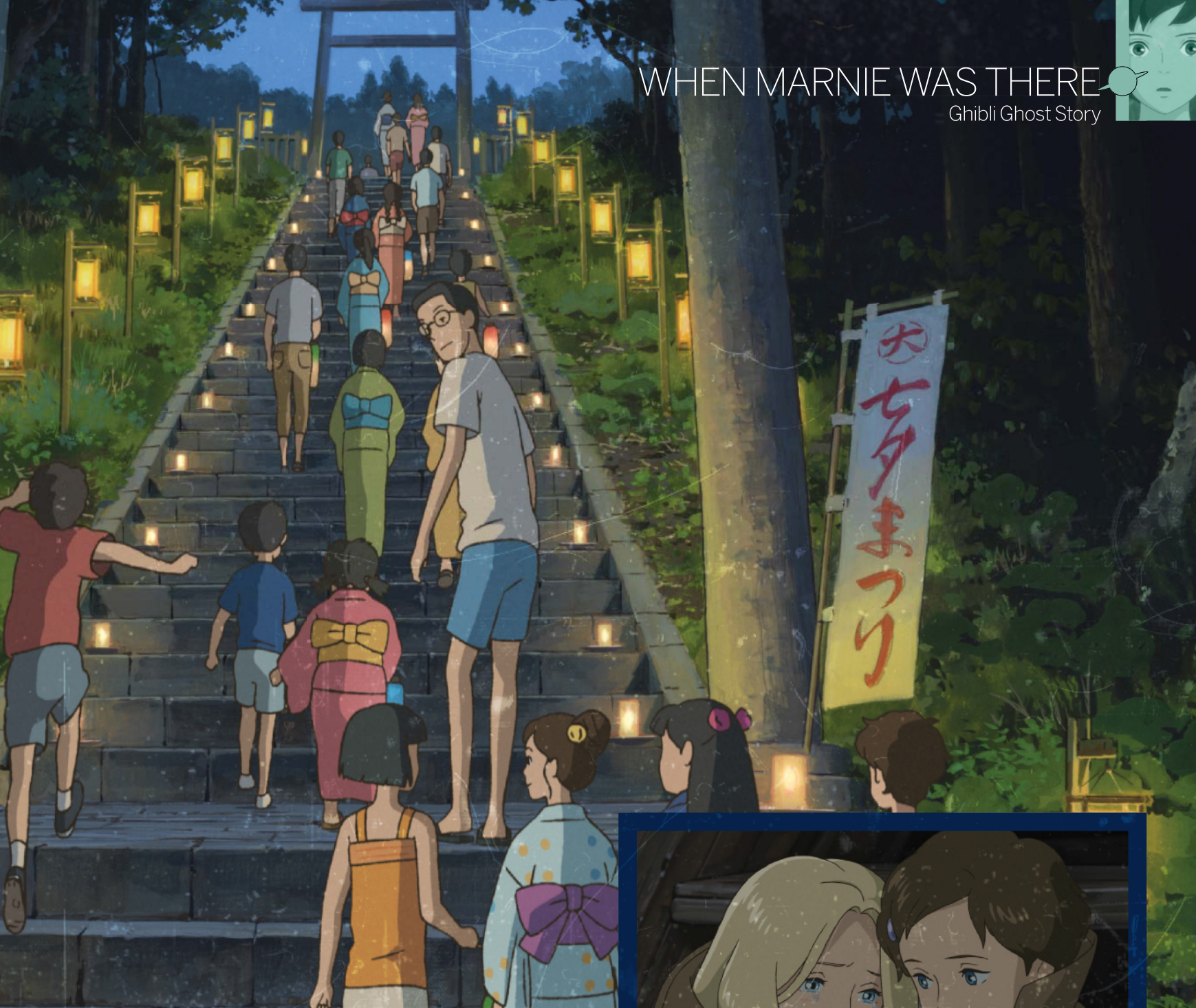
HIROMASA YONEBAYASHI

original novel's publication by about three years. They were going to call the novel just *Marnie*, but because of the film, they changed the title to *When Marnie Was There*. It's a nice title, isn't it?"

In the film, Anna strikes up a connection with an older artist and it's tempting to see that teacher-pupil relationship as reflecting the dynamic between Miyazaki and Yonebayashi, especially given that the latter was once groomed as a potential successor within the studio. Asked to describe what Miyazaki's legacy means to him personally, it's clear that Yonebayashi continues to hold his mentor in the highest esteem: "I joined

WHEN MARNIE WAS THERE

Ghibli Ghost Story



Studio Ghibli in 1997 as an animator when Miyazaki was a director, and I worked on all his films from that point on. So I personally inherited all the techniques from Miyazaki, and the things he told me, they are my life's treasure. I also inherited both his approach to animation and his ambition."

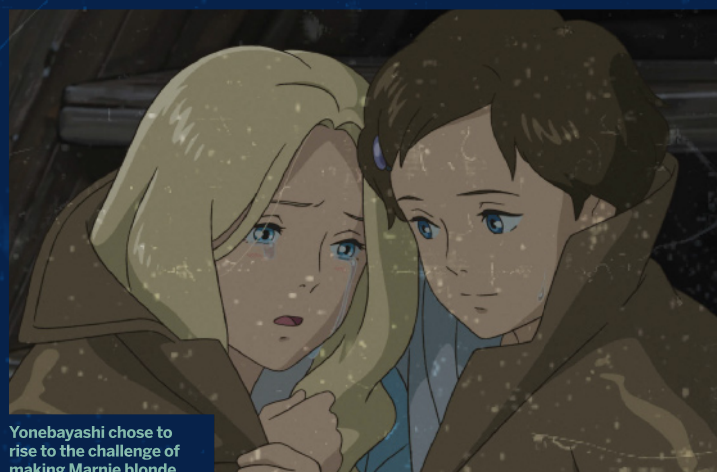
Both of those qualities are reflected in Yonebayashi's stunning depictions of the natural world. The director expands: "Marnie is sort of a fantasy character, so when she's not around, Anna's world needs to be very realistic. And in terms of animation, drawing something realistic is very, very technical and very difficult."

Indeed, the task of bringing one particular element to life proved particularly challenging for Yonebayashi: "Water was very difficult. One of my previous films was *The Wind Rises* and the wind was depicted there, so I wanted to draw water here, but it was much more difficult than

I imagined, because with water you have a choice of getting closer or panning out or drawing it from on top or from the bottom. Yes, it was very difficult. But when it was completed, Miyazaki told me the water was as if he could reach out and touch it, so everything was worthwhile."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, when asked which animators he most admires, Yonebayashi names Miyazaki and Takahata, whose final films before retirement were, respectively, *The Wind Rises* and *The Tale Of Princess Kaguya*, a spectacular pair of swansongs, by any account. On a similar note, the director names *Whisper Of The Heart* as his favourite Ghibli movie, citing it as the reason he joined the studio in the first place.

However, asking for his non-Ghibli favourites yields a rather touching (and entirely relatable) confession: "My favourite animated movies other than Ghibli's films



Yonebayashi chose to rise to the challenge of making Marnie blonde.

are Disney's classics, particularly *Pinocchio* and *Bambi*. I still cry whenever I see *Bambi*!"

Whatever the future holds, it's clear that Yonebayashi will continue to make films, just not under the Studio Ghibli banner. On the subject of his future projects, he says: "Up to now, I've been making films, like *Arrietty* and *Marnie*, that are sort of static films, as opposed to dynamic films set in a fantasy world. So I'd like to make a film set in the future with a character dynamically moving about in a fantasy world." ♡



When Marnie Was There will be released in cinemas on 10 June.

THE ART OF WARCRAFT

ONE OF THE MOST POPULAR VIDEOGAME ADAPTATIONS OF ALL TIME IS FINALLY HITTING THE BIG SCREEN THANKS TO DIRECTOR DUNCAN JONES, BUT CAN IT BREAK THE SCREEN-TO-CINE CURSE? WE VISIT THE SET OF WARCRAFT: THE BEGINNING TO FIND OUT...

WORDS JOE NAZZARO

IT'S A CHILLY WINTER MORNING IN VANCOUVER'S BRIDGE STUDIOS, WHERE THE UNIVERSAL STUDIOS/LEGENDARY PICTURES LONG-IN-DEVELOPMENT FEATURE ADAPTATION OF BLIZZARD ENTERTAINMENT'S WORLD OF WARCRAFT IS WELL INTO PRODUCTION UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP OF Duncan Jones (*Moon*). In the scene being shot, Anduin Lothar (*Vikings* star Travis Fimmel) is being arrested for dereliction of duty. There are lots of men in suits of armour, leather and metal, but the set itself is sparse. It's a straightforward scene, but Jones isn't completely happy with it, so they go through it again. And again. And again.

Warcraft is being shot in an unusual hybrid style. The elaborate sets (by the *Star Wars* prequels production designer Gavin Bocquet) are real, with virtual extensions. The human and elf characters are played in costume on those practical sets, while Orcs and dwarves are portrayed by actors in motion-capture suits with ILM creating photo-realistic versions during a long post-production process.

For those who have been living under a virtual rock for the past couple of decades, *Warcraft* is a hugely successful franchise from Blizzard Entertainment, consisting of videogames, books and a multi-player online role-playing game in which millions of players interact in real time.

Turning the property into a successful feature was more problematic. A script by Charles 'Chuck' Leavitt (*Seventh Son*) had been in place for some time, but matching it with the right director took a bit of work. "The film development

process is not an exact science," explains producer Charles Roven (*Batman V Superman*). "So much of it is about finding the right participant, whether it's the writer or director, but ultimately the director has to make the movie his own.

"I think it's pretty common knowledge that Sam Raimi was originally attached to the project at one point," Roven continues. "We started the development process with Sam and went down a certain road, but Sam ultimately wanted to make a film that was a bit different, but we never got to the finish line on that script. Sam went off to do *Oz: The Great And Powerful*, and since that script was so much his vision, it didn't pay for us to work with another director on that vision. We didn't have one right away, but Chuck Leavitt had come up with a really great story, which was this 'origin' story about the first contact between Orcs and humans, and we liked that approach a lot. And then Duncan came in, and we really felt that particular story would be successful."

Jones and his producing partner Stuart Fenegan were both long-time *Warcraft* players ("My wife threatened to divorce me at one point!" admits Fenegan) who had expressed an interest in the film, only to discover that they had been beaten to the punch by Raimi. "They let us know they had an affinity for the project," notes Roven, "but we were otherwise occupied, so they went off and did *Source Code*."

"We knew Mr Raimi was still attached," continues Fenegan, "but you still make those exploratory phone ➤





SET VISIT

Warcraft



Toby Kebbell stars as Orc leader Durotan, the being tasked with leading his people to salvation.

“THE ORCS ARE LIVING ON A PLANET THEY CAN’T SURVIVE ON ANY LONGER. THEIR ONLY OPTION IS TO GET OFF IT” CHARLES ROVEN



⇒ calls saying, ‘It’s been a while; has anything changed? Is there something we could read?’”

“When Sam went off to do *Oz*,” finishes Roven, “I think it was shortly after *Source Code* came out [back in spring 2011], so we went back to those guys and said, ‘Let’s talk about it!’ So Duncan and Stuart came in, and Duncan said, ‘Here’s my point of view, so I would like to take Chuck’s script and add this aspect to it.’ He took that one-sided narrative and rewrote it, so the narrative is now told from both sides.”

The revised Leavitt/Jones screenplay acts as an origin story of sorts for newcomers, while hopefully providing enough material to make the gamers happy as well. “We wanted to give it a sense of the ‘beginning,’” confirms Roven, “and we also wanted to reference one of the great things about *Warcraft*, which is that there are two sides, the Horde and the Alliance. That’s the great thing Duncan brought to the script when he rewrote it so the film is told from the point of view of the citizens of Azeroth, led by Stormwind, and the point of view of the Orcs.

“The story basically tells the story of these two sides, and the fact that the Orcs are living on a planet they can’t survive on any longer. Their only option is to get off it, so they are given the option to go to this beautiful planet of Azeroth, which is inhabited by humans, led by the citizens of Stormwind. They’ve enjoyed peace for quite a long time. That kingdom has been the guardian of that peace, with the great military commander, Lothar. He and the other characters have been responsible for that peace, which is about to be broken by a huge conflict with these Orcs that is about to happen on an epic scale.”

The producers concede that there has been no shortage of videogame-based films in the past, most of which were less than successful, but the *Warcraft* cast and crew is filled with die-hard gamers that with a vested interest in making this a hit. “Duncan

has played the game and been a fan of it for years,” offers producer Jillian Share, “and the same with Stuart. Bill Westenhofer, out visual effects supervisor, is a huge *Warcraft* gamer.”

“One of the first questions we asked people when interviewing them,” adds Fenegan, “was, ‘What do you know about *Warcraft*?’ Bill’s response was, ‘I’m a level 90 mage, I have a level 90 warrior and a level 90 hunter,’ so we thought, ‘Okay, that’s a yes!’”

“There are stories like [actor] Daniel Wu,” says Roven, “whose wife convinced him that he couldn’t miss this opportunity, because she was such an avid gamer.”

“They just had a baby,” claims Share, “and she said, ‘You can either share parental duties, or you can make my dreams come true and be in *Warcraft*!’ Rob Kazinsky, another one of our actors, is a big gamer, and he’s our barometer for everything. He walked into the Lion’s Pride Inn set, and tears were running down his face because he was so impressed by how much we were able to capture that feel.”

A BIG PART OF THAT FEEL DERIVES FROM THE USE OF MOTION-CAPTURE AND STATE-OF-THE-ART DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY TO CREATE SOME OF THE GAME’S SIGNATURE CHARACTERS. “IT WAS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF US THAT THE ORC CHARACTERS REALLY DELIVERED,” INSISTS

Fenegan. “Audiences are so educated now, the only way to do that was digitally, but we didn’t want to shoot it the way that *Avatar* was shot, where everything was grey stage, with people in mo-cap and everything happened in post-production.

“It was important to Duncan that he shot as much of the film in-camera as possible, so we have this interesting hybrid, which has never been done before. [It] is beautiful live-action sets, with fully costumed human characters, interacting with large numbers of motion-capture characters, and a great deal of post-production work going into it.” ⇒

**BEN FOSTER (MEDIVH)**

"The fellow I play is a mage, and his responsibility is to protect the creature and people and citizens that populate Azeroth. The way he protects Azeroth is the use of magic. In a classic story of those who have been charged with tremendous responsibility, he's removed himself from his friends to some degree, and is now being called back to help with the building conflict."

**TOBY KEBBELL (DUROTAN), ANNA GALVIN (DRAKA)**

TK: "My character is chieftain of the Frost Wolf Clan. We're both Orcs, who are deeply in love and expecting a child together."

AG: "Our relationship is defined by mutual respect, adoration and attraction. I am his peer, and even though he is the chieftain, I can sway his point of view, and I convince him that I should accompany him to Azeroth in spite of my pregnancy."

**BEN SCHNETZER (KHADGAR)**

"My character was a novice in the Kirin Tor, an order of wizards, but he turned his back on that way of life, the only person in their history to renounce his vows and walk away from it. He now pursues magic and wizardry on his own terms, so he's turned his back on political life, and almost by accident gets swept up in the events of this film and ends up going on this ride."

**TRAVIS FIMMEL (LOTHAR)**

"I play a warrior and commander of Azeroth's military forces. The land has enjoyed peace for many years, so he suffers from the military man's curse: the better I do my job, the less I'm asked to do it. Driven by love and loyalty to his king and country, sometimes at the expense of his family and personal relationships, Lothar fights for those who have pledged their lives to his kingdom."

AGENTS OF AZEROTH

WHO'S WHO IN THE WORLD OF WARCRAFT

**DOMINIC COOPER (KING LLANE WRYNN)**

"King Llane is a good man who is good to his people. He's not an aggressor, but he's trying to do things as best he can, with as little damage as possible, which at this moment is quite a complex situation. He doesn't know which way to turn, but it seems that this is the more reliable route to take, and the more trusting one, and it's actually a big mistake!"

**DANIEL WU (GUL'DAN)**

"Gul'dan is Orc a magician, who's dealing with this magic called the 'Fell Magic.' It's a corrupting magic, but he believes it's what the Orcs need to ensure the survival of the species. There are Orcs suspicious of the Fell, as well as humans that want to use the Fell to corrupt the human population, so it's not a simplistic, black-and-white world."

**ROBERT KAZINSKY (ORGRIM)**

"I play Orgrim Doomhammer, second in command of the Frost Wolves, Durotan's right-hand man. They've been best friends since childhood, and the Frost Wolves are the moral compass to the Orcs. Orgrim struggles over his loyalty to friend and family versus loyalty to clan and race, and ends up making some very difficult decisions that affect what happens to the future of the game and the film universe."

**PAULA PATTON (GARONA)**

"Garona is half-Orc, half-human, so she has one foot in each world but belongs in neither, so she's the ultimate outsider. I think a lot of people can relate to that, because we want something that connects us to the rest of the world, and Garona is desperately in need of that. She's proved she has a place among the Orcs, but is still not fully accepted by them."



SET VISIT

Warcraft



These Orcs aren't of the *Lord Of The Rings* ilk; they're truly monstrous propositions, which their design had to reflect.

OLD-SCHOOL ORCS

THE SECRETS OF WARCRAFT'S WARRIOR RACE

Despite what press materials for *Warcraft* would have you think, the characters weren't all created digitally. Some were produced the old-fashioned way, using make-up and animatronics. Lindala Schminken FX was brought in for Garona's make-up, but ended up tackling the elves, a demon version of Medivh and aging make-up for the sorcerer, Antonitus.

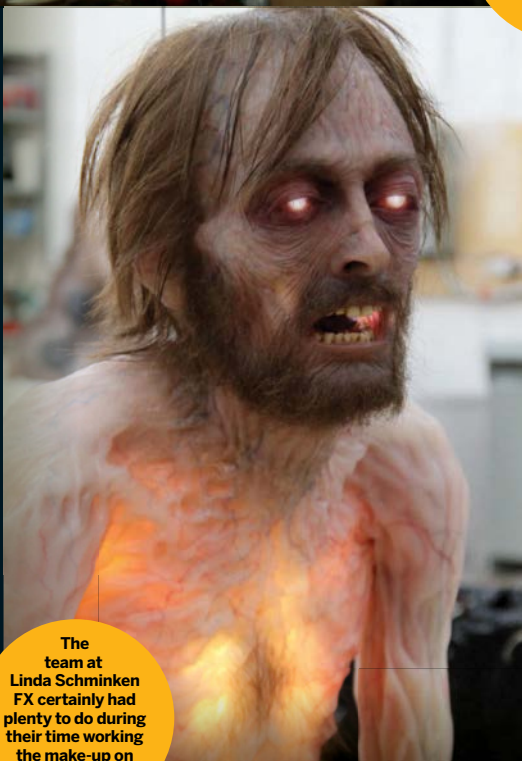
As Lindala recalls, "Paula's Garona make-up was relatively simple, consisting of a dental appliance for her tusks, ear tips and some scarred sigils. Ben [Foster]'s demon character was quite elaborate. That was a big prosthetic make-up, including teeth that grew out of his jaw line, a craggy skin, some extreme contact lenses and silicone hand appliances with monstrous nails. They will never be confused with *Lord Of The Rings* elves."

"And because Toby Kebbell was already playing an Orc, they decided to use him twice, so he became this ancient sorcerer, for whom we did a three-and-a-half-hour, nine-piece silicone make-up, as well as some indented sigil tattoo transfer piece to give him more of a magical appearance. We finished the look with a flopped beard, which can be quite difficult to do every day."

Adrien Morot, who had created the animatronic double of Jake Gyllenhaal's character for *Source Code*, was also enlisted to build a series of photo-realistic Orcs that could be used as lighting reference on set; and an animatronic character who gets the magical life force sucked out of him. Explains Morot, "I thought, 'This scene has a CG character sucking the life force out of a puppet character, in a CG environment, so my puppet would be the only live-action element? This is suicidal!'"

Not only did Morot and his team end up building the animatronic dummy with moving internal organs, but decided to add a series of glowing lights that would illuminate the character from within. "I got back to the shop the following day," he remembers, "as my guys were building a crate to put it in, I went to an electronics store during lunch and bought a bunch of LEDs, and I put them inside the dummy and said, 'How about this?'"

"I showed it to Duncan, who was super-excited about it, so we re-did the entire thing, adding an under-skull that would accommodate the lights, new eyes the lights could come through, and a brand new jaw mechanism. That was the version we travelled to set with, and we puppeteered it next to an actor in a motion-capture suit, so we were basically the only practical element there."



The team at Linda Schminken FX certainly had plenty to do during their time working the make-up on *Warcraft*.





Robert Kazinsky surveys the scene as the fittingly formidable-looking Orc warlord Orgrim Doomhammer.

“WE’VE TRIED TO CREATE A FILM THAT WILL INVEST YOU BY ENGAGING IN BOTH SIDES OF THE STORY” CHARLES ROVEN

“What you have to remember,” points out Westenhofer, a two-time Oscar-winner for *Life Of Pi* and *The Golden Compass*, “is that these guys are supposed to be seven feet tall and weigh 400 pounds, so we wanted them to move like really massive, athletic and muscular creatures. But another thing that is special here is that we’re able to see it in real time. With early motion capture, you captured the stuff, recorded it and went back to it later on to see what it looked like. By being able to see it in real time, [movement choreographer] Terry Notary can tell our actors, ‘Lower your weight and do this!’ and the Orcs suddenly look even more massive. So they’re not just acting; they’re actually creating the character.”

YOU MIGHT THINK SOME ACTORS WOULD RESIST THE NOTION OF WEARING A FORM-FITTING MOTION-CAPTURE SUIT WITH DOZENS OF TRACKING MARKERS COVERING EVERY INCH OF EXPOSED SKIN, BUT THE OPPOSITE APPEARS TO BE TRUE. “I LOVE IT!” DECLARES

actress and genre regular Anna Galvin, who’s dressed in that very dots-and-onesie combo as this conversation takes place. “I don’t have to be pretty; I don’t have to be younger or wrinkle-free. And I don’t have to be in prosthetics, which can be quite painful and irritating.

“When I watched the making of *Avatar*, I thought, ‘I want to do that!’ because it looked like the ultimate realm of escapism: no make-up, no costume; just utter make-believe. Although I thought it would be like a cat suit and more ninja-ish. You really have to park your vanity at the front door.”

“It totally strips you down,” agrees Toby Kebbell, aka Galvin’s on-screen Orc husband, Durotan. “With those lights on the cameras in front of us, it’s like doing a theatre performance,

because when you’re doing a play, you can’t see everybody out there. It stops that nonsense about, ‘Move that guy out of my eye line!’ because you can’t see anyone, so it’s brilliant.”

It’s now been two years and a massive amount of post-production since that visit to Vancouver, during which time the technology used to create *Warcraft*’s non-human inhabitants has continued to improve in leaps and bounds. All of which, the producers hope, will make things even more amazing looking when it finally hits our screens.

“What we’ve tried to do,” says Rovent, “is create a film that will engage you by investing in both sides of the story. You’ve got the warring Orcs as the irresistible force, and the humans of Azeroth as the immovable object, but you’re going to be invested in both, so the emotional stakes are even higher.

“You’ll still have these amazing battle sequences and an incredible visual experience, but it’s also going to be amazing to watch how real these motion-capture characters are. It’s easy enough to be compelled by a human actor in a human role, but to have the ability to be invested in a completely virtual character, that’s a thrilling experience.”

“In the very early stages of prep,” remembers Fenegan, “Duncan and I sat in an LA coffee shop with Jeff White from ILM. We looked him in the eye and said, ‘If we are going to do this movie, we have to make sure these Orcs are the best CG characters that have ever been in existence!’ and he said, ‘Okay, so we’re in good hands.’”

“We can’t wait to present our Orcs to the world,” promises Rovent. “They’re so real, you want to reach out and touch them!”

Warcraft: The Beginning will be released in cinemas on 3 June.

The bluffer’s guide to World Of Warcraft

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW SO YOU CAN PRETEND YOU HAVE BEEN PLAYING FOR YEARS...

What exactly is *World Of Warcraft*?

Well, it’s an online multiplayer role-playing game, but it’s *massive*. When you sign up you have to build a character to act as your in-game avatar, and then it’s up to you. The aim is basically to become an amazing warrior with loads of skills and heaps of gold.

How many people play?

World Of Warcraft currently has over 5 million monthly subscribers. That number peaked at a massive 12 million in 2010, what with levels being completed and competing games like *Guild Wars 2*, *Rift* and *EverQuest* emerging from all over the place, but maybe the new film will bring in more players and, more importantly, more levels.

How much does it cost?

For one month of play it’s £9.99. The price drops a little if you sign up for more time, but you have to commit to it for either three or six months at a time. You can always try it out for free with *World Of Warcraft Starter Edition*. The package lets you test out the waters without spending anything, but you won’t be able to hold onto more than 10 gold, go beyond 100 in any trade skill, use full in-game chat or advance beyond level 20. It also expires after ten days, but by then you’ll either be hooked enough to pay or be sick of the sight of it.

So how do I play?

Once you’ve got your subscription and made you character, you must select a realm. The realms to choose from include normal (a player versus environment realm), PvP (a player-versus-player realm), RP (a realm where players must role-play in-character) and a RP-PvP (self-explanatory). From there, you play the game with the aim of developing your character. The more game hours you rack up, the more gold you rake in and the more skills and talents your character will develop. You’ll be advancing levels in no time. Then you’ll be able to start joining parties and rolling with the gamers who started playing in utero.



MUST-SEE TV

Preacher



UNDER THE

HOW SETH ROGEN AND
EVAN GOLDBERG TURNED
A BLASPHEMOUS,
UNFILMABLE COMIC
INTO THE MUST-SEE NEW
SHOW OF 2016

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL
INTERVIEWS ADAM TANSWELL, ABIGAIL CHANDLER

UNFILMABLE' IS A WORD THAT GETS THROWN AROUND A LOT. IT'S USUALLY AN EXAGGERATION THAT TRANSLATES TO 'A BIT DIFFICULT.' WHEN IT COMES TO GARTH Ennis and Steve Dillon's Vertigo comic *Preacher*, it's a little more apt. It's the story of a faithless preacher with the power to make anyone do anything he says. So he decides to hunt down God and make him answer for his creation. This is blasphemous, ultra-violent filth. The starry list of names who have tried to adapt it isn't surprising, nor is the fact that no one has succeeded. Until now.

"We just got lucky that we were the guys around when someone decided to turn it into a TV show," laughs Seth Rogen, who along with his *Pineapple Express* and *This Is The End* writing partner Evan Goldberg, is the man who has finally brought Ennis and Dillon's twisted vision to life.

The comic ran for 75 issues from 1995 to 2000, and it's a rambling road trip that starts in Annville, Texas before criss-crossing through the heart of the US (with occasional trips to France and Vietnam). Jesse, his gun-toting girlfriend Tulip and Irish vampire buddy Cassidy are the heart of a fantastic, gruesome, dangerous and (occasionally) sweet world that Ennis and Dillon created. Rogen tells us that a TV series was the only option. "For this type of story with as many characters as it has, as giant a world as it creates, I think that's one of the reasons that it never worked as a movie," he tells us. "Many people far more talented than us tried to turn this into a movie, and just didn't. I don't think it was them. I think it was the format."

Going by the rapturous reaction to the pilot screening at SXSW, it sounds as though this was the perfect team to adapt it. "It was just thrilling," recalls star Ruth Negga of reading the pilot script. "I had to have a moment. I was familiar with the comics, but I'd never read anything like it. I'd never read a character like Tulip before."

Rogen and Goldberg may not have been the first people you'd think of to adapt such a revered piece of work, but anyone who saw *This Is The End* will know that they're a dab hand with R-rated biblical filth and profanity-strewn humour. They're quick to stress that this is a definite change of pace for them. "I mean, inherently, *This Is The End* is just stupid," laughs Goldberg. "There's truly no similarities between the two projects, really."

"We tried to avoid 'stupid' a little bit more than we normally do," adds Rogen. ➤



Dominic Cooper takes on the lead role as Jesse Custer.



MUST-SEE TV

Preacher



AS VIOLENT AND DISTURBING AS PREACHER GETS, AND AS BIG AS SOME OF THE ECCLESIASTICAL ISSUES ARE, ONE OF THE GREAT JOYS OF THE COMIC IS THAT IT IS VERY, VERY funny, as Ennis tears strips out of the nastier side of American culture with a dazzling combination of wit, violence and toilet humour.

There's just something joyful in Jesse ordering a KKK member to shit himself.

"Why is it the greatest champions of the white race always turn out to be the worst examples of it?" he asks a white power gathering in Salvation. "You! Where the fuck is your chin?" And for all of the meat-fuckers, S&M Nazis, inbred descendants of Christ and furious angels, there's a big beating heart there too. "Don't take no shit off fools," Jesse's late father tells him. "You gotta be one of the good guys, son: 'cause there's way too many of the bad."

"That's really Garth's creation," enthuses showrunner Sam Catlin. "There's lots of violence and drama and all of that, but there's always comedy. That's the real challenge and opportunity that he's given us. We have characters who are going to do horrific things in one episode and then come back and just do really silly things."

"And that's why it's great," adds Goldberg. "Real life is funny and sad and horrifying and joyous. Everything good and bad under the sun."

Inevitably, there were going to be some changes. As episodic as the comic is, a shot-for-shot adap would not really work. There's new characters and some timeline shuffling, but most interestingly it seems like the first season of the show at least is firmly rooted in Jesse's home town of Annville, a backwater, bigoted and hateful little place, and the team refuses

to be drawn on exactly how much road-tripping there will be.

"It didn't seem, at first, that we should [make changes], and then we talked with Garth, and he encouraged us to make a lot of small changes and to make it a good show," explains Rogen. "Our big thing is we want fans who love the comic to get everything they want, but also make some new twists and turns," adds Goldberg.

"There's all sorts of Easter eggs throughout," adds Catlin. "We are very conscious of what the *Preacher* audience is expecting and the mythology that they know about, and that's a big, fun part of it, having that subterranean dialogue with the fans of the comic that doesn't obviously confuse the people that are just coming to the show for the first time."

It's fair to say that the fans of the comics were keeping a very close eye on the casting of Jesse, Tulip and Cassidy. Rogen and Goldberg settled on Dominic Cooper (*Agent Carter*) for the role of the tortured holy man, Ruth Negga (*Agents Of SHIELD*) for the violent-but-principled Tulip, and Joseph Gilgun (*Misfits*) for highly entertaining disaster area Cassidy. "It was a long process, and we saw tons and tons of people," recalls Rogen. "When I watch it now, I couldn't possibly imagine anyone else."

"It was a very hard role to take on, and I was kind of terrified by the prospect," says Cooper. "I was desperate to play him. It was wonderful having the comics, but still quite difficult to decipher from them who this person really is. It's not like a novel, where there are very long, descriptive passages of who this person is. It's an absolute honour to play him, but such a responsibility."

"I'm not from America," continues Cooper, "so I was very nervous a lot of the time, and I'm still really finding my way. That's what will be very exciting about this journey: discovering who he is, where he gets to and what he ends up thinking about himself. He's a very complex, conflicted individual. I don't know whether he's a good man. He's



Joseph Gilgun raising bloody hell as Irish vampire Cassidy.



Ruth Negga stars as Jesse's former other half Tulip O'Hare.

Out Of Development Hell Charting the tortured history of Preacher adaptations

1998

Garth Ennis and Rachel Talalay

Ennis was working on adapting his own comic for Electric Entertainment in the late Nineties before the end of its run, with a 1998 draft intended to be directed by *Tank Girl*'s Rachel Talalay. The script reportedly stuck close to the first volume, *Gone To Texas*.

2000

Kevin Smith and Scott Mosier

The View Askew guys were attached to the project for a while as producers. Smith clarified that it was purely to help Ennis and Talalay, taking the script to Bob Weinstein. Weinstein passed because he didn't get on with it and would have had to distribute with Electric Entertainment.

2001-2002

James Marsden is Jesse

Electric Entertainment partnered with Storm Entertainment and gave Talalay and Ennis the green light. A \$25 million budget was set, and *X-Men*'s James Marsden was cast as Jesse Custer in 2002. However, it would eventually fall apart over financing concerns.



PREACHER

Hot Under The Collar

How many other stories have a character called Arseface?

I THINK IT'S WONDERFUL THAT CASSIDY HAS BEEN AROUND FOR AS LONG AS HE HAS, AND HAS ACHIEVED NOTHING

JOSEPH GILGUN

The focus of the story is Jesse's search for God after He goes missing.



2006

Mark Steven Johnson and HBO

HBO picked up the rights to *Preacher* and hired *Daredevil* and *Ghost Rider* writer-director Johnson to pen the pilot and plan out a series bible. Johnson initially planned to be shot-for-shot faithful. However, there was a change of heads at HBO and it was deemed too controversial.

2008

Sam Mendes and John August

Columbia Pictures were the next company to roll the dice, hiring *Skyfall* director Sam Mendes, while *Big Fish* writer John August got to work on the script. Then it followed the exact same pattern of getting ready to go and stalling, and Mendes went and did Bond.

MUST-SEE TV

Preacher



It looks like Cassidy's alcohol-soaked nature is being retained.



It remains to be seen how faithful *Preacher* is to the comics

➤ trying very hard to be a good man. He's trying very hard to change his life and to help the people of this crumbling society that he finds himself a part of. But there's a lot more to do and find. I'm very excited at the prospect of where he's going to go and end up."

We're excited about *This Is England* veteran Gilgun playing Cassidy. "I think what is wonderful about Cassidy is he's been around for as long as he has and achieved nothing," he tells us. "It's like putting an end to all of this sexy vampire business. I think that he's a rogue, isn't he? He's a traveller, and he's out to move. He gets in trouble here, and then he has to go there. And then he gets in a lot of trouble there. He consistently makes terrible decisions, and that's why I'm perfect for the role. Thank you."

The character that got the biggest reaction from that SXSW showing was Tulip. Word is that the glimpse of car-bound brawl we get in the trailer is a tiny fragment of a jaw-dropping, brutal set piece, and that Negga sinks her teeth into the role. "[Tulip's] amazing," she claims. "She's sort of an uncensored version of ourselves, certainly of me." As for the stunts, Negga tells us that she trained in Krav Maga. "I think I did almost all of [the stunts]," she muses. "You bit that guy's ear off," adds Rogen. "I walked in on a rehearsal," laughs Gilgun. "She was choking a man's throat in the back of a

WE WANT THE SHOW TO BE FUN FOR REGULAR PEOPLE WITH NOT SICK SENSIBILITIES

SETH ROGEN

car. I walked by, 'Are you alright, Ruth?' 'Yeah, I'm not so bad.'"

AMC has already delivered stomach-churning gore with *The Walking Dead*, and Rogen tells us that it's a balancing act. "It's a constant discussion... There's no formula for it. We want it to be watchable and fun and entertaining, and we don't want it to be alienating."

"We had a very long argument about whether or not [redacted for spoilers] should have his ear bitten off, or his nose," explains Catlin as an example. "And we basically were like: the nose, that's just disgusting. You can't do the nose. That's way over the top, but somehow the ear... it's alright."

"We want the show to be fun for regular people with not sick sensibilities," Rogen deadpans. "Put that on a poster."

"I think, as well, it would be difficult to bite someone's nose off," adds Gilgun. Sounds like there's something for everyone. ☺

Preacher will air on AMC Global from 23 May.

Heavenly host

A who's who of Preacher



JESSE CUSTER
Dominic Cooper

The titular Preacher who's lost his faith and suffered through a terrifying upbringing at the hands of his monstrous family. On the plus side, he's got Tulip and the power of Genesis. Principled. Chain-smoking. Loves westerns.

TULIP O'HARE
Ruth Negga

Growing up with her army vet dad, Tulip was raised to be self-sufficient and handy with a weapon. She'll do anything to protect Jesse, including following him on this dangerous quest. Dangerous, loyal, someone you don't want to cross.



CASSIDY
Joseph Gilgun

An Irish vampire with a fondness for... pretty much everything. He's great fun, but there's a reason why no one stays friends with him. He's over 100 years old, and has learned nothing from his time on Earth.

ARSEFACE
Ian Colletti

In the comics, Arseface is the son of Sheriff Hugo Root, and a lovely guy. He ended up with a face like an arse after shooting himself in the face in an attempt to mimic Kurt Cobain. After *Gone To Texas*, he sets out in pursuit of Jesse.



ODIN QUINCANNON
Jackie Earle Haley

The Meat-Man, Odin is one of *Preacher*'s true monsters, running his small town with an iron fist and leading the local chapter of the KKK. Oh, and he loves meat, and not in the 'meat-lovers pizza' sense.

DEBLANC AND FIORE
Anatol Yusef and Tom Brooke

These two angels are sent to Earth to try to retrieve Genesis, since they were supposed to be looking after it. Their efforts are ineffectual, and Jesse tends to bully them into giving him info on God.



SHERIFF HUGO ROOT
W Earl Brown

Not the nicest man you could hope to be the big badge holder in your small town. His wife's death and his son's face have made him bitter, and he's a nasty, violent racist.

HERR STARR
?

It's currently unclear whether *Preacher*'s main villain will appear in the first season, but the Grail's twisted, brutal chief badass tirelessly hunts Jesse throughout the comics.

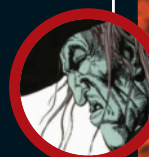


MARIE L'ANGELLE
?

Jesse's terrifying grandmother, who kidnaps her runaway daughter, her new husband, and young Jesse. She ends up raising Jesse with the help of her loyal muscle Jody and TC. She's very bad news.

THE SAINT OF KILLERS
?

When Heaven wants someone killed, they call the Saint Of Killers. He's absolutely unstoppable, and dresses like he is some kind of Western gunslinger. He refers to a nuclear blast as "Not enough gun."



THE DUKE
?

Every boy needs an imaginary friend, and Jesse's happens to look and sound like John Wayne. The Duke was Jesse's only help during his tough childhood years, and frequently reappears to remind him to stay on track.

GOD
?

The big guy. Gone AWOL.





As well as *Preacher*, Dillon has garnered acclaim for his writing on *The Punisher*.

SAINT OF ARTISTS

STEVE DILLON TALKS PREACHER

WORDS ABIGAIL CHANDLER



PREACHER
Hot Under The Collar

What do John Constantine, the Punisher, Wolverine, Judge Dredd and Jesse Custer have in common? Aside from being morally dubious badasses, that is? They've all been brought to life at one time or another by British comic-book artist Steve Dillon.

"Strange, isn't it?" he remarks. "These guys just seem to find me. As a kid I was a superhero fan, and that's what I drew, but the vast majority of my career has been spandex-free since I started work at 16 years old."

His work on some of the most well-known characters in comics would have been enough to catapult him into the comic-book hall of fame, but it's one of his original comics that really cemented his reputation. He is the co-creator, along with writer Garth Ennis, of *Preacher*.

Have you seen any of *Preacher* yet?

I watched [the pilot] at Garth's place in October. Garth had already seen it, but it was new to me. I enjoyed it! I knew it wasn't going to be a slavish copy of the book, as we'd all agreed that wouldn't work on TV, but we wanted them to keep the spirit of the thing. I feel they did that,

and there was a lot that was familiar, as well as a few surprises.

How have you found the process of having your work adapted?

Seth and Evan have been great to deal with, as they are fans of the book and have a good grasp of what it's all about. [Garth and I have] been as involved as we've wanted to be. Garth, being the writer and living in the States, has been more hands-on with things than me. He and I tend to sing from the same hymn sheet as far as *Preacher* goes, so I've tended to throw my opinions to back him up as much as anything else.

It's been 16 years since the comics ended. Do you think that makes you more objective?

Definitely more objective. If the book was still coming out we'd be worried that a bad TV or movie version would hurt it. As it is, the book is done, dusted and been out there for a long time, and can stand on its own. Luckily, we don't have to worry with this version... There were a few times in the pilot that I really felt my drawings had crawled off the page and into the TV. I'm looking forward to being surprised by what turns up.

Is there anything from the comics that you think it really needs to keep?

It has to keep the essence of the characters. The story has a definite beginning, middle and end, but the middle is flexible enough that you can bend it

Dillon approves of the work done on the TV series.

without breaking it. The characters and their motivations are what drive the whole thing forward. The themes can remain, though they might occasionally have to be dealt with in a slightly different manner to the book. Certain things that work in comics don't work in TV. That's just the nature of the beast.

Do you think there was something uniquely British about Vertigo comics?

I wouldn't say that they were distinctly British, as the Americans can do that as well as anyone. Maybe the way the Brits handled it seemed fresh for comics at the time, and we just got in there with it before the American guys did.

How have you found returning to *The Punisher* with Becky Cloonan?

Becky is doing a cracking job on the scripts, and she's taking Frank Castle to a few places we're not used to seeing him. A few people have said to me that they are unsure whether a woman can write a character like the Punisher. That's bollocks. As I said, I think the scripts are really cool, and I hope the readers agree.



QUINTUPLE OR NOTHING

ORPHAN BLACK IS BACK, AND WITH IT COMES THE PROMISE OF EVEN MORE CLONE-RELATED HIJINKS. WE SPOKE TO CREATORS JOHN FAWCETT AND GRAEME MANSON ABOUT WHAT'S COMING UP IN SEASON FOUR...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER

USUALLY, ORPHAN BLACK LEAVES US WITH SOMETHING TO KEEP US BUSY FOR A YEAR UNTIL THE NEXT SEASON COMES ALONG – A MYSTERY OR A CLIFFHANGER TO FRET OVER.

Season Three, however, ended with a nice Clone Club family dinner at Alison's new boutique soap shop and a sweet mother-daughter reunion in Iceland. Everything seems quiet. A bit *too* quiet.

"At the end of Season Three we left our characters, for the first time, in kind of an okay place," says co-creator John Fawcett. "It almost felt like a resolution. It felt like we ended the season with a bit of peace of mind rather than, 'Oh my god, there's male clones!' or 'Oh my god, Kira's gone!' That allowed us to take a moment, have a little time with our characters and reset ourselves, and kind of almost take a new

approach to setting forward into the next leg of the journey."

But what about Delphine, you may be thinking. She got bloody shot! But in all honesty, that's quite a minor emergency compared to what *Orphan Black* routinely leaves us with. She could still be alive. When asked if they'd heard from fans about that little plot twist, they can't help up laugh. "Nobody made a peep," jokes Fawcett. "The silence was deafening!" chimes in co-creator Graeme Manson.

"It's always a tough decision to pull the trigger on a character that not just the fans love, but we love, and we knew that it was going to have a strong reaction," Fawcett admits. "We also knew that this was an important part of telling our story, of telling our mystery. It feels devastating, but it's an absolutely vital piece of the puzzle."

After a year away, fans are excited to get back to the high-speed action we're used to seeing from the saga. "We set out to do this fast-paced, edge-of-your-seat type of viewing, where you're constantly pulling the rug out from under the audience," says Manson. "When we were first conceiving of it we were referencing feature films, you know, like *Memento* and *Run Lola Run*, ➤



This is John Fawcett's fourth season working alongside Tatiana Maslany.

“IT FEELS DEVASTATING, BUT IT’S AN
ABSOLUTELY VITAL PIECE OF THE PUZZLE”
JOHN FAWCETT

MUST-SEE TV

Orphan Black



Cosima, Sarah and Scott have trouble making sense of the science behind the saga.

➤ things like that that had that pacing. You're in the shoes of the main character... Every season when we sit down to begin it, that's always at the front for us. It's like, put yourself in the audience's shoes. How do we continue this type of storytelling that's entertaining? You're asking the question: how are we going to get out of this one?

"Now that we've got three seasons under our belt, we can go back to the beginning of our own mythology, which is something that John and I wanted to do. The pace of the show is so quick that we're always leaving something that we think is cool behind and going, 'Oh, we'll have to come back to that!' Part of telling serialised TV, certainly this year, we've always had this plan to loop back and to use Neolution, and go back and re-examine them as sort of the season's big bad."

EVER SINCE THE SHOW PREMIERED ON BBC AMERICA BACK IN 2013, ORPHAN BLACK FANS FOUND THEMSELVES BEING DRAGGED INTO THE WORLD OF THE LEDA CLONES AND unable to climb back out again. That's

mostly down to two things that the show does brilliantly, the first of which being genre. It's hard to place what *Orphan Black* is exactly. It's definitely sci-fi – the clones make sure of that – but it's also a thriller, a family drama, a comedy and a mystery. The story is universal. The clones have such contrasting personalities and individual storylines that Manson admits nailing the balance is sometimes difficult.

"It is a real challenge, but it's also one of the things that John and I set out to do," he tells us. "We've been working TV writers and directors, and we've done all kinds of stuff, lots of procedurals and cop shows, I've done westerns... So we were comfortable in a bunch of different genres. When we fell into the world of clones and we were looking to delineate these clones, we realised really quickly that they each needed to have a really vivid world. That came down to how we are going to approach each world."

"Graeme and I just didn't want to make something that was derivative or cliché or felt like anything that you'd kind of

“GRAEME AND I JUST DIDN'T WANT TO MAKE SOMETHING CLICHÉ”

JOHN FAWCETT



Helena really takes to Donnie. He is strong, like baby ox.

seen before," Fawcett adds. "One of the other things, a very clear objective from the beginning, was to make a sci-fi story about clones, make it compelling, but for the love of god, don't take yourselves too seriously! It's got to be funny, right? It's got to have a good sense of humour running through the whole thing... Then on top of that, we just love all genres, not just sci-fi. We love horrors, we love thrillers, we love comedies. It was kind of like, we can't do it all? Why can't we? We have very distinct characters in the first place. They all live in very different worlds. Why can't this world be funny and this world be dramatic and this world be sci-fi and science, and then mash them all together?"

The second element that *Orphan Black* continually knocks out of the park is its wide range of characters. Each clone is so

The ups and downs of Donnie Hendrix

5
4
3
2
1

Donnie is tied up and tortured with a hot glue gun by Alison, who believes him to be a monitor.

Donnie lets Aynsley hold an intervention for Alison.

Donnie accidentally shoots and kills DYAD scientist Dr Leekie.

ORPHAN BLACK

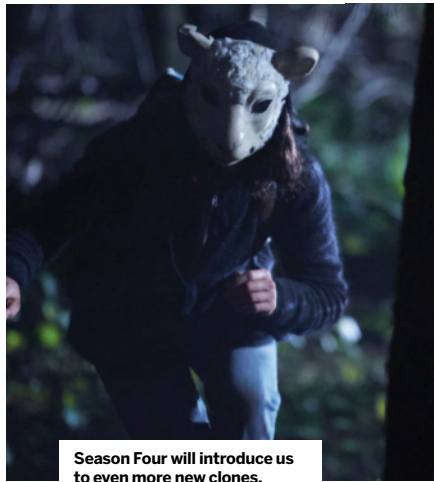
Quintuple Or Nothing



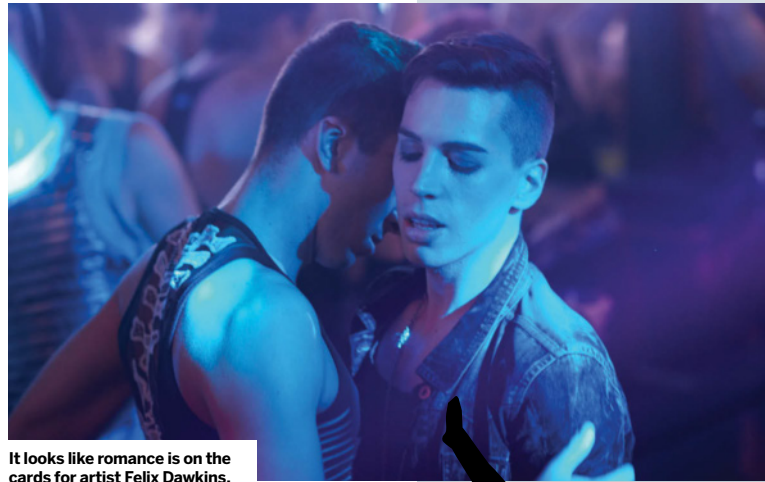
Will Alison Hendrix become even more of a loose cannon this season? We hope so.



Sarah and her sisters need to go back to the beginning.



Season Four will introduce us to even more new clones.



It looks like romance is on the cards for artist Felix Dawkins.

unlike the last that it seems impossible that they're all Tatiana Maslany, only in extra eyeliner, a wig or a clip-on fringe.

"From my point of view, it's been really amazing to see her process from the beginning, and see how her process as an actor in creating these characters has developed over the seasons," Fawcett tells us. "She arrives on set already in character, speaking in the voice of character, dressed like the character and then remain in character even between takes, over lunch, and not switch gears until she has to. And then she goes off for a transformation and comes back speaking in the next character's voice, speaking as Cosima."

"When I'm giving her direction between scenes, I'm talking to Cosima," he continues. "I mean it's Tat, I know it's Tat, because she's there and we're having a discussion about the work and about the story and about the character and about whatever technical challenges we have to face, but she's speaking to me in that voice, in the energy of Cosima all the time. I think that helps her delineate and

stay focused in the feel and the skin of the character. That's something I haven't seen before in all of my television wanderings."

As much as we love the Clone Club as an unstoppable unit, we all have our favourites. "I'm very partial to Cosima," says Manson, "and also Sarah is really my girl, because Sarah is the one who's usually driving the story. She's the one that I spend the most time with and struggle with like a sister!"

"My two faves are probably Alison and Helena," Fawcett tells us. "I love Alison because she's this sort-of alcoholic, quirky suburban mom who had a craft room and shotguns, and is kind of loosely based on my sister. That's my version of it. I'm sure Graeme has a version of who Alison is attached to in his own mind." Fawcett goes on to explain that they attribute the clones to different people in their own lives. "It's been real people in our lives often where we go, that character should be a bit like this. Alison is a bit like my sister."

Does this mean that even the extremes, such as Helena, also exist in their lives?



"I don't know that Helena is like anyone that I know, but I like [Helena and Alison] because they're both fun. You can go a lot of different directions with either of them, and the audience just seems to love what they do," Fawcett explains. "They love their quirks, and they love the fact that they're funny and the fact that Helena can do anything at any moment."

"I think it's great, because she's kind of like our little Encino man, you know?" he continues, "She probably doesn't know how to work a microwave, and she only listens to music from the Seventies that was played at the nunnery when she was 11. She's childlike but dangerous."

Juggling the clones is a momentous task, and one that they don't take lightly. "All of these girls, Sarah, Alison, Helena, Cosima, they're the heart of *Orphan Black*, and we feel very fortunate that these characters that are all very separate and distinct from each other have all sort of found their way into, you know, people just attach themselves to a specific character, and it's amazing to see."

But it is not just down to the writing and directing; Maslany immerses the audience in these characters with finesse. "You forget that Tat is playing all these parts, and you go, 'I love that character', and Tat plays that. After that someone else goes, 'I love Cosima', and Tat plays that too. She is truly amazing to watch work, and it's great to have characters that you know the fans really love and admire." 

Orphan Black: Season Four is available to watch now on Netflix.



John Fawcett directs Tatiana Maslany and Jordan Gavaris.

Donnie helps Alison bury Dr Leekie before getting freaky on the garage freezer.

Donnie helps Alison run for school trustee by buying Ramon's drugs and becoming drug dealers.

Donnie gets held hostage by Pouchy until his drug money arrives.

Donnie confronts Alison's old boyfriend Jason, but gets knocked out cold.

Donnie gets the drug money back, but only after Helena violently kills Pouchy.

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SciFiNow Reviews

Our thoughts on the pick
of the entertainment
releases out this month



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TOP 10s Read our lists relating to our favourite genre shows, and give your thoughts on whether we were right

AWARD EXPLAINED THE 'MUST SEE NOW' AWARD GOES TO REVIEWS THAT SCORE EIGHT OR MORE...

SciFiNow
Must
see now!

76 HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

"AS PRETTY AS IT IS, IT'S
ALSO KIND OF BORING"

TRIVIA FRANK DARABONT WAS THE ORIGINAL CHOICE AS DIRECTOR FOR *THE HUNTSMAN*.

FILM INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

12A

Director

Cedric Nicolas-Troyan

Screenwriters

Craig Mazin, Evan Spiliotopoulos

Cast

Chris Hemsworth, Emily Blunt, Charlize Theron, Jessica Chastain, Nick Frost, Rob Brydon, Sheridan Smith, Alexandra Roach

Distributor

Universal Pictures

Running Time

114 mins



THE HUNTSMAN: WINTER'S WAR

Winter's bore

TEAM QUEEN

The best queens of the fantasy realms



Red Queen

Alice In Wonderland (2010)

The Queen of Hearts is easily one of the most ridiculous characters in *Wonderland*, and that's saying something.

White Queen

Alice In Wonderland (2010)

The Red Queen's well-behaved counterpart possesses the best eyebrows in all of *Wonderland*.

Elsa

Frozen (2013)

The reluctant queen of Arendelle became an icon when she belted the world's favourite Disney power ballad.

The White Witch

Chronicles Of Narnia (2005)

Tilda Swinton took menacing (and Turkish delight) to a whole new level as Jadis.

The Evil Queen

Snow White And The Seven Dwarves (1937)

Snow White's evil step-mother messed us all up good and proper back when we were innocent Disney-loving children.

Much like Snow *White And The Huntsman*, *The Huntsman: Winter's War* is absolutely stunning from a visual standpoint. It's more gorgeous than its predecessor, if that was even possible. It might be to do with the fact that the first film's visual effects supervisor, Cedric Nicolas-Troyan, graduated to director for this one. If you're a sucker for fantasy landscapes then it's worth going to see for that alone.

As devastatingly pretty as it is, however, *Winter's War* is also kind of boring. There's not that much to the plot, and what is there is often predictable. Many of the set pieces have little to do with the grand scheme of things, to the point where they might as well come with a big sign reading 'We needed the film to be longer' written in giant flashing letters.



The threat, of which there is actually a lot, is also a bit lacklustre. Even though the story is being sold as a 'dark retelling' of the old fairy tale, it's obvious how it's all going to work out. To be fair, it's extraordinarily dark in places, especially for a 12A (think burning babies), but even that isn't enough to overpower the frequent dullness.

One of the film's biggest problems is that the story (and handful of plot twists) has a tendency to not make sense. Sure, it's a fantasy, and sure, characters in fantasies often find sneaky and magical loopholes to get out of trouble, but when the loopholes are coming out to play in what feels like every other scene, they get old very quickly. The peril gets less and less convincing as the film plays out, and frankly it's annoying.

Winter's War is occasionally pretty funny, especially with Rob Brydon, Sheridan Smith and Alexandra Roach joining Nick Frost as the film's resident comic-relief band of dwarves, but the jokes, which start out strong, quickly melt into characters just shouting out "bollocks" and "wanker" for cheap laughs.

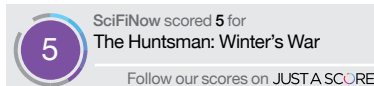
However, Chris Hemsworth continues to be charming and extremely likeable as Eric the Huntsman, and carries the film very well. He's its heart and soul, and it gets easier and easier to really care about him and his problems as the film plays out.

The script is so-so and the plot is flimsy, but the cast do a good job of pretending they're not. Charlize Theron is as deliciously evil and menacing as she was in the first film as Queen Ravenna, Emily Blunt is fabulous as her sister Freya the Ice Queen, and Jessica Chastain is a fun addition as Eric's warrior wife Sara, even if it is difficult to understand her Scottish accent at times.

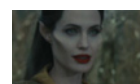
Even with its failings, *Snow White And The Huntsman* stood out from the rest of the live-action fairy tales because it was a positive, very feminist retelling. Sure, it was a bit dull and predictable, but it was also empowering. You would think *Winter's War* would be even more feminist, what with two new female leads being added, but it turns out that it's really not.

Winter's War would have really benefited from taking over the empowerment torch. Instead, it's almost two hours' worth of women betraying each other.

Poppy-Jay Palmer



OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Maleficent

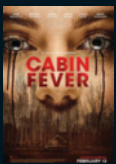
Angelina Jolie is magnificent in this dark and super-feminist retelling of the traditional *Sleeping Beauty* story.



CABIN FEVER

Gone rotten

Details 18 // 99 mins // 13 May **Director** Travis Z **Screenwriters** Randy Pearlstein, Eli Roth **Cast** Gage Golightly, Matthew Daddario, Samuel Davis, Nadine Crocker, Dustin Ingram **Distributor** Arrow Films



It's easy to look at Travis Z's remake of Eli Roth's *Cabin Fever* as a pointless exercise. Leaving aside the fact that the original film was released as recently as 2002, the film uses the same script as Roth's movie, with the only major diversion from the source being the removal of the comedy elements. Still, there was something kind of intriguing about the idea, and as fans of the original we were curious to see whether there was in fact something worthwhile to be found in this retelling. Sadly, the answer is no.

For the uninitiated, *Cabin Fever* finds five college graduates heading to a cabin in the woods for a break filled with sex and beer. On their first night, they're attacked by a crazed hermit suffering from some kind of gruesome illness, and in their panic, the kids kill him. Stranded without a car or phone signal, they realise the terror isn't over, and that there's something in the water.

First things first: the original film was a horror with comedy elements, not a comedy, so this is not as radical a reworking as you might think. Although perhaps it is, as it turns out that removing the sense of humour makes the whole thing feel a lot more clunky and unpleasant.

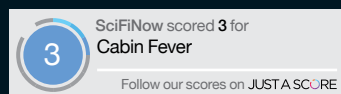
In a post-*Cabin In The Woods* world, you would hope that there's a great sincere cabin in the woods movie to be made, but this isn't it.

Fitting in alongside the lack of humour is an increase in blood and guts that really comes into play in the film's final third, but given that it's working from the same script, these gruesome set pieces don't feel scary or shocking; they simply feel cruel.

Of the cast, only Nadine Crocker as the reasonable Marcy really makes an impression, although Dustin Ingram's Bert occasionally gets a giggle. The gender-swapped role of Deputy Winston pretty much is one of the film's biggest changes, but that character doesn't work without Giuseppe Andrews' off-kilter charm.

This new vision is produced by Roth, but the stamp of approval isn't a guarantee of quality. It just makes the whole thing seem as cynical as it is dull.

Jonathan Hatfull



OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Cabin Fever
Eli Roth's original is a lot more fun, and now it feels weirdly nostalgic thanks to this remake.



GREEN ROOM

You gotta fight for your life

Details 18 TBC // 94 mins // 13 May **Director** Jeremy Saulnier **Screenwriter** Jeremy Saulnier **Cast** Anton Yelchin, Patrick Stewart, Imogen Poots, Alia Shawkat, Joe Cole **Distributor** Altitude



Jeremy Saulnier follows his incredible revenge thriller *Blue Ruin* with the brutal *Green Room*, a siege horror that will leave you breathless.

Punk band The Ain't Rights are broke and hungry at the end of a disappointing tour. So when they get offered a gig playing at a right-wing bar, they're not in a position to quibble. After a bit of tension with the locals the gig goes off without a hitch, but when they see something they're not supposed to, the band find themselves locked in their green room surrounded by armed, angry and capable men. Who will make it out?

Much can (and should) be made of the brutal violence, but what gives this its impact is the affection we have for these characters. They're an incredibly likeable group, and the casting is absolutely spot on. Anton Yelchin is on great form as Pat, the indecisive group leader, ably backed up by Alia Shawkat, Joe Cole, Callum Turner, and the excellent Imogen Poots as the local girl who knows what's coming.

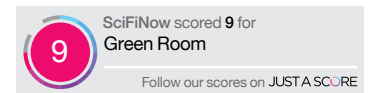
Like *Blue Ruin*, *Green Room* is both unflashy and brilliantly constructed. Once things get dark, Saulnier drops us into this terrifying situation and ratchets up the tension. From the moment that Pat finds himself looking down the barrel of a gun, we're in a nightmare that is only going to get worse, and no one is in any doubt about how bad things are going to get.

When it comes to depicting that nightmare, Saulnier doesn't flinch, and we spent a good deal of the film rushing to put our hands over our face. When the characters get hurt, it hurts. When they die, it's horrific.

Then there's Patrick Stewart as Darcy, the bar owner and leader, who underplays it beautifully. His quiet fury is very effective, but not as much as his calmer moments, rationally planning out the best way to dispose of the bodies or trying to convince Pat that this has all been a big misunderstanding.

You won't catch a breath for a good 30 minutes in the middle, and you will emerge bruised, shaken and affected. This is a brilliantly crafted and executed nightmare that you won't soon forget.

Jonathan Hatfull



OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Assault On Precinct 13
John Carpenter's classic throws cops and crooks together as a police station comes under siege.



CRIMINAL Kevin Costner does Taken

Details 15 // 113 mins // Out now **Director** Ariel Vromen **Screenwriter** Douglas Cook, David Weisberg **Cast** Kevin Costner, Gary Oldman, Tommy Lee Jones, Gal Gadot, Ryan Reynolds **Distributor** Lionsgate



CIA agent Bill Pope in London (cue a Ryan Reynolds cameo) is the only person who knows the location of a flash drive containing a programme that can launch the world's missiles, but he is killed by an anarchist group who are in pursuit of the drive.

CIA boss Quaker Wells (Gary Oldman) decides that the only way to get to the flash drive before the terrorists do is to get Tommy Lee Jones' neurosurgeon to implant Pope's memories into that of a brain-damaged, emotionless criminal – Kevin Costner's ridiculously named Jericho Stewart. Jericho gets all of Pope's memories – plus his spy skills and his love for his wife Jill (Gal Gadot) and their daughter.

The flaw in the plan to put CIA skills in the head of a man with no emotions or moral compass is obvious, and Costner has a whale of a time playing the inappropriate, detached Jericho, who has no qualms about beating up and even killing innocent bystanders. The violence isn't cartoonish enough,

nor are the victims deserving enough for Jericho's violent streak to be entertaining, which we suspect is the tone the film makers were going for. Instead, it just leaves you feeling queasy.

Costner has fun in the lead role, but Oldman and Jones are criminally under-used. Oldman's lines consist mainly of shouting, while Jones just walks around with permanently sad eyes, although he and Costner at least share one good scene.

The only supporting cast member with more than nothing to do is Gal Gadot, even though all she's really there for is to aid Jericho's emotional development and get imperilled. Still, she comes out of the film well, and her performance here bodes well for her *Wonder Woman* movie.

The film has some good action sequences, but the plot is weirdly convoluted and it's hard to forgive the misuse of so many great actors. Worst of all, it's underdeveloped – it could have been a lot of fun if they'd spent more time refining plot, character and tone.

Abigail Chandler

SciFiNow scored **4** for Criminal
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Taken
A group of criminals kidnap Liam Neeson's daughter. Big mistake. Don't bother with the sequels though...



THE BOY This doll is dross

Details 15 // 97 mins // Out now **Director** William Brent Bell **Screenwriter** Stacey Menear **Cast** Lauren Cohan, Rupert Evans, James Russell **Distributor** Entertainment Film



The monstrosity of grief and the loss of a child hangs heavy in the air in this doll horror that's clearly influenced by the Hammer canon.

Unfortunately, *The Boy* isn't fun enough to keep you entertained, and it doesn't have a good enough grasp on its serious issues to make it moving. Instead, it keeps you firmly in the chokehold of boredom and stupidity, with few laughs or scares along the way.

Greta (Lauren Cohan) has made the move from the US to the English countryside to take a job as a nanny. Situated in a crumbling mansion in the middle of nowhere with no mobile phone signal, she's alone apart from the grocery delivery man, Malcolm (Rupert Evans), and the couple who are employing her to look after what they claim is their son Brahms, but is in fact an inanimate but very detailed doll. Her first reaction is laughter, and that's what the director plays with for a while, but the humour is too fleeting

and doesn't eke enough out of the absurdity of the situation.

There should have been more knowing glances, but the fun is sucked out of it after about 15 minutes when the couple take off and leave Greta alone to follow their strict care regime for their son. The rules for looking after Brahms are a bizarre list that work nothing into the story apart from the use of some loud classical music.

A creaky screenplay full of clichés is occasionally knowing, and includes a twist that some may not see coming, but Bell's insistence on using slow-motion shots repetitively to add some sort of dramatic flair to horrific moments is massively embarrassing.

Norton and Hardcastle as the couple who employ Greta don't get much to do apart from look forlorn. Evans and Cohan appear to be in on the joke, and do their best with the terrible dialogue and poor pacing, but a shift in tone in the third act is clunky, laboured and just doesn't work.

Katherine McLaughlin



SciFiNow scored **4** for The Boy
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Housebound
Director Johnstone delivers old-school scares with skill and wit in a riotous haunted-house horror.



PANDORICA Future imperfect

Details 15 // 81 mins // Out now **Director** Tom Paton **Screenwriter** Tom Paton **Cast** Jade Hobday, Marc Zammit, Luke D'Silva, Bentley Kalu, Adam Bond **Distributor** The Film Label



Some films wear their micro budget on their sleeve while at the same time reaching for the sky. Not that there's anything

wrong with this, but they should at the very least give the impression that aspiring to something bigger is a realistic possibility. Sadly, in *Pandorica*, you never get the impression of this being anything other than what it is: a shoestring-shot post-apocalyptic shocker.

Part of the reason for this is the lack of imagination involved. The premise is a thinly veiled one, taking place in a not-so-nice future where humanity has regressed into a tribal society, the youngest members of which are forced to go on some sort of journey masquerading as a rite of passage aimed at choosing their future leader. Inevitably, complications arrive, and the group are left in a desperate struggle to survive while unsuccessfully trying to overcome the differences in outlook between them.

In a film lacking budget or effects, strong performances are paramount, but sadly there are none to be had. Young leads Jade Hobday, Marc Zammit and Adam Bond are all pretty wooden, leaving us with little to really latch on, nor any reason to

empathise with them. Being the sole women, Hobday's Eiren is inevitably – and quite disappointingly – the target of the most scorn, and therefore the apparent target of the audience's sympathy, but she herself never really displays any signs of inward struggle or reason why we should take her side, other than being slightly put upon.

Everything's stylishly shot by newbie director Tom Paton, but the lack of anything beyond this gives us few reasons to actually care about what's going on.

A late appearance from Bentley Kalu (*Avengers: Age Of Ultron*) is a highlight, but it's not really enough to elevate *Pandorica*, which fails to escape the impression that it's been shot entirely in the woods behind someone's house.

So in other words, if you're looking for the next low-budget hit then you will end up disappointed, as this isn't it.

Steve Wright

SciFiNow scored **5** for **Pandorica**
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



The Survivalist
A trio of survivors do whatever it takes to survive in Stephen Fingleton's debut.



HARDCORE HENRY Ready for a big-screen videogame?

Details 18 // 96 mins // Out now **Director** Ilya Naishuller **Screenwriters** Ilya Naishuller, Will Stewart **Cast** Sharlto Copley, Danila Kozlovsky, Haley Bennett, Tim Roth **Distributor** STX Entertainment



Every so often, a film comes along with such a brilliant and simple premise that you wonder why it wasn't done sooner. In this

case, it's clear why no one has made a first-person action film before – because without high-def GoPro cameras, it just wasn't possible.

Hardcore Henry centres on Henry, our eyes and ears, a man brought back to life with cybernetic implants after a mysterious accident. Moments after being woken up, his scientist wife is kidnapped by telekinetic villain Akan.

Henry's mission to rescue his wife brings him into contact with Sharlto Copley's mysterious English geezer Jimmy (or, rather, *Jimmys* – there are quite a few of them), and together they run headlong into utter carnage.

The plot is thin on the ground because the plot isn't the point of *Hardcore Henry*. It's all about mental balls-to-the-wall mayhem, and it's easily the most innovative – and fun – action film we've seen in a long while.

The film boasts a dizzying free-running sequence like nothing

you've seen on screen and, like the videogames it emulates, features mini-missions across various terrains and vehicles – there's a motorbike chase, a helicopter, forest fights, even a horse.

But where it really hits its mark is in the comedy moments. There are some great unexpected instances of slapstick (that horse again), but the real comedy genius of the film is Sharlto Copley. This is the role(s) he was born to play – one moment he's a coked-up nutjob in Y-fronts, the next he's a mohawked punk. Who cares that his English accent is wobbly – this just seems to make his performance even better. By the time he's breaking out the musical numbers you won't have a clue what's going on – but you'll love it all the same.

Of course, if you suffer from bad motion sickness then you won't love this film at all. It's difficult to watch on a big screen, and at times moves just too quickly for your brain to process what's happening. It's often like watching a GoPro video of a bicycle crash on a big screen with a bitchin' soundtrack, but you won't see another film like it all year.

Abigail Chandler

SciFiNow scored **8** for **Hardcore Henry**
Follow our scores on JUST A SCORE

OR STAY IN AND WATCH...



Crank
Jason Statham must keep his heart going no matter what the cost in this bonkers action flick.

FILM INFO

Released

Out now

Certificate

12

Director

JJ Abrams

Screenwriters

Lawrence Kasdan, JJ Abrams, Michael Arndt

Cast

Daisy Ridley, John Boyega, Oscar Isaac, Adam Driver, Harrison Ford, Carrie Fisher

Distributor

Walt Disney Studios Home Entertainment

Running time

135 mins

Extras

Details

- 8 featurettes
- Deleted scenes



STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS BB-Gr8

NO BUSINESS LIKE MO BUSINESS

The best motion-capture performances

Gollum

The Lord Of The Rings

Andy Serkis' turn was creepy and heartbreaking, and kick-started the rise of mo-cap.

Neytiri

Avatar

Zoe Saldana made us fall in love with both Pandora and the Na'vi the moment she put on one of those weird body suits.

Davy Jones

Pirates Of The Caribbean

At World's End was a bit blah, but Bill Nighy's tentacle beard was a thing of wonder.

Nebbercracker

Monster House

Google 'Steve Buscemi motion capture'. Do it. It's the stuff of your darkest fears.

Caesar

Rise Of The Planet Of The Apes

Andy Serkis again, this time as the most emotive ape in cinematic history. Is there anything he can't mo-cap?

Star Wars: The Force Awakens is one of the – if not *the* – most talked about films of all time. Even when it wasn't due for months, rumours were circulating, theories were formulating and everyone was excited, and for good reason. If the last five months have taught us anything it's that *Star Wars* probably doesn't have an expiration date. It just keeps giving and giving. Sure, *The Force Awakens* put off a handful of lifelong fans of the saga, but for the most part it acted as delicious foreplay for *Episodes VIII* and *IX*. We're along for the ride now, and it will take a heck of a lot to make us get out and walk.

30 years after Darth Vader's demise, Rey (Daisy Ridley), a young scavenger from the planet Jakku, comes across what turns out to be the most important droid in the galaxy. Wanting to help the Resistance and with nowhere to go, Rey makes it her mission to return the droid to the elusive Resistance, along with the help of a rogue stormtrooper named Finn (John Boyega), a wookiee named Chewbacca (Peter Mayhew) and the legendary smuggler Han Solo (Harrison Ford).

There's a lot of chat about *The Force Awakens* being too much like *A New Hope*, and it might be a good point, but do we actually care? *Star*

Wars wasn't the first to tell the story of the underdog who found out they were special. It's a story people have been telling for years, and will likely continue to until the end of time. Joining Rey on her journey brings nothing but joy, creating a timeless tale that stays fresh and fun on the second, third and probably 90th watch.

We should also talk about the particulars of the home release. The DVD comes in a pretty sweet case that is reminiscent of the first poster, but the Blu-ray pushes the boat out a bit more. If you're partial to a good art cover or steel book then you're going to want to get your hands on one of the limited edition dark side/light side sleeves so you can display it with pride on your movie shelf/*Star Wars* shrine.

The special features are lovely too. Included are six deleted scenes and a collection of behind-the-scenes featurettes: 'Secrets Of *The Force Awakens*: A Cinematic Journey' gives an inside look at the making of the films with in-depth footage and exclusive interviews; 'Building BB-8' spills secrets about how they brought the droid to life; 'The Story Awakens: The

Table Read' has the main cast reminiscing about their first day; 'Crafting Creatures' shows how the creators brought the creatures of Jakku, Takodana and more to the screen, and 'Blueprint Of A Battle: The Snow Fight' goes deeper into Rey's lightsaber battle with Kylo Ren.

Elsewhere, 'John Williams: The Seventh Symphony' sees the saga's composer discuss the world of *Star Wars* and share his own personal insights on his work on it; 'ILM: The Visual Magic Of The Force' breaks down some of cinema's most breathtaking digital artistry and visual effects, and 'Force For Change' explores the good people have done all over the world in the name of charity and *Star Wars*.

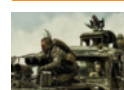
Poppy-Jay Palmer



SciFiNow scored **9** for *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*

Follow our scores on [JUST A SCORE](#)

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THE NINTH CONFIGURATION

For God and country

Details 15 // 118 mins // 1980 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** William Peter Blatty **Cast** Stacy Keach, Scott Wilson, Ed Flanders **Distributor** Second Sight



William Peter Blatty will be forever remembered as the author of *The Exorcist*, but this spiritual sequel contains some of the writer's best work. It's a dark comedy, a horror, a mystery and a search for God in a seemingly godless place.

After the war in Vietnam, the American military witnessed a sharp rise in soldiers going insane. They established centres to see if these GIs were legitimately mentally ill, and our story focuses on one set up in a castle near the coast.

Colonel Hudson Kane (Stacy Keach) arrives to evaluate the men, becoming particularly interested in Captain Cutshaw (Scott Wilson), who refused to launch a shuttle heading to the Moon (the character is the astronaut who Regan McNeill told "You're going to die up there," in *The Exorcist*). As the two

men discuss the existence of good and evil, and whether there really is a God, the question of sanity begins to take a back seat.

Shot in Budapest (the castle's place in the US is never really convincing), the film is a wonderfully atmospheric piece that starts as a weird comedy and becomes something quite different.

The collection of oddballs who are undergoing treatment are a fascinating bunch, with Jason Miller (*The Exorcist*'s Father Karras) trying to mount a production of Shakespeare plays starring only dogs, Robert Loggia in blackface, Moses Gunn in a Superman suit, and actual war hero Neville Brand as the soldier trying to keep these lunatics in line.

But it's Kane and Cutshaw who are the film's focus, as the latter challenges the former to give him one genuine example of man's goodness. The dialogue is beautifully written as the



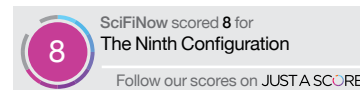
two verbally spar with each other, and Blatty never really attempts to conceal the fact that Kane is hiding a pretty massive secret.

It slows down once it hits the halfway mark, but the key bar-room sequence late in the film is superb, and there's a real emotional impact to the final reveal. It's flawed but fascinating, and repeat viewings continue to reveal new pleasures.

The excellent Blu-ray contains new interviews with Blatty, Keach and

others, and some tales of the raucous troubled production that fans will want to hear about.

Jonathan Hatfull



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Shutter Island
Martin Scorsese dabbles in horror with his beautifully made mystery set on an island-bound asylum.

DARK SIGNAL

Just a voice on the radio

Details 18 // 95 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Ed Evers-Swindell **Cast** Siwan Morris, Gareth David-Lloyd, Joanna Ignaczewska, James Cosmo **Distributor** 20th Century Fox Home Entertainment

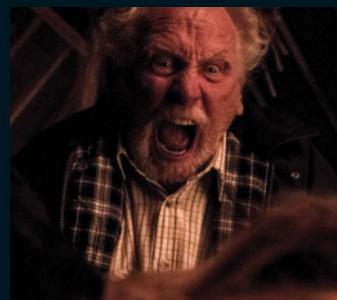


Two seemingly (mostly) unconnected storylines collide in this Welsh-set debut from Ed Evers-Swindell.

Dark Signal finds single mum Kate (Joanna Ignaczewska) making a nasty discovery at a country house, while DJ Laurie (Siwan Morris) is determined to go out with a bang, but ends up getting more than she bargained for from a guest medium.

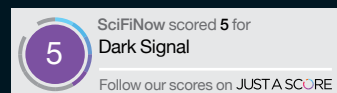
While the connection made between Kate and Laurie's storylines is crucial to the plot, Evers-Swindell may have been better off focusing on one, as the growing dread in the studio is really quite effective (the writer-director shares producer Neil Marshall's love of *The Fog*), while the countryside slasher thrills are less so.

The leads are solid, and there's good support from *Torchwood*'s



Gareth David-Lloyd and *Game Of Thrones*' James Cosmo as a potentially dangerous local. The twist is quite nifty, and there are a couple of good chills, but it doesn't really hang together. That being said, there's enough promise here to keep an eye on Evers-Swindell.

Jonathan Hatfull



KRAMPUS

Spreading festive fear

Details 15 // 98 mins // 2015 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Michael Dougherty **Cast** Adam Scott, Toni Collette, David Koechner, Allison Tolman, Emjay Anthony **Distributor** Universal Pictures UK



It may not be Christmas right now, but as the year descends into a relative lull, there can be no better time to appreciate the festive season.

From the opening scene showing fighting shoppers getting tasered by security guards and a children's nativity play descending into an all-out brawl, *Krampus* sets out its stall as the anti-Xmas movie, and does so well.

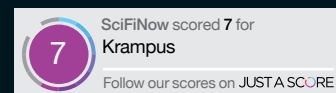
Backed by a strong cast featuring Adam Scott, Toni Collette, David Koechner and Allison Tolman, *Krampus* efficiently goes about establishing the characters before inflicting the titular menace on them in all his inglorious nature.

The term horror-comedy is overused, and many of its recipients never lay claim to either

description, but Michael Dougherty successfully ticks 'funny' and 'scary' off his to-do list.

It doesn't quite manage to nail down a tone (it's jarring to see people getting on as if their relatives haven't just been murdered), but *Krampus* more than earns its place on your festive TV viewing regime.

Steve Wright





THE LEECH WOMAN

Hell hath no fury

Details 12 // 77 mins // 1960 // **DVD** // **Released** 23 May **Director** Edward Dein
Cast Coleen Gray, Grant Williams, Gloria Talbott, Phillip Terry
Distributor Screenbound Pictures



The behind-the-scenes story of *The Leech Woman* is an unlikely one. Only created by Universal because the studio needed another film to play as a

double bill alongside Hammer's *The Brides Of Dracula*, Edward Dein's 1960 horror belies its shoehorned origins by actually being quite good.

Arrogant doctor Paul Talbot (Phillip Terry) journeys to Africa in an attempt to discover the secret of eternal youth, forcing his mistreated, alcoholic wife June (Coleen Gray) to accompany him as an unwilling guinea pig. But when she becomes the beneficiary of the elixir, her younger self continues to take her destiny in her own hands, leading to her becoming the predatory murderess of the title.

Despite being 56 years old, and obviously of its time in a number of respects (the portrayal of the African tribesmen is vintage Hollywood), *The Leech Woman* is equally light years ahead in others. Before June becomes a monster, we're given ample time to get to know the woman she once was: one

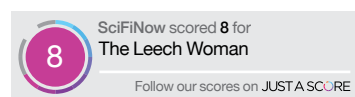
trampled and psychologically tortured by her husband to such an extent that alcohol becomes her only solace. So much time is spent on establishing her victim status that it's hard not to root for her when she turns the tables on him.

Her later actions make any defence of her slightly more problematic, but with her issues having been laid bare before us, it's still hard to accept her as a monster, no matter how indefensible she becomes. Coleen Gray, in particular, should come in for praise: weighed down by old-age make-up in the early scenes, she continues to bring new depths to what seems on the surface to be a superficially pulpy role, and it's thanks to her that the character is as memorable as she is.

Even so, it's not perfect by any means. The obvious use of stock footage comes across as jarring, and the final third definitely has a rushed feeling about it – you get the sense that the pacing could have been slightly more measured, such is the relatively breakneck pace of the opening half.

But these are mere quibbles; this is definitely worth your time.

Steve Wright



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



Attack Of The 50 Foot Woman
 Starring Allison Hayes as the protagonist, this would make for a great double bill.

BLOODSUCKING BOSSES

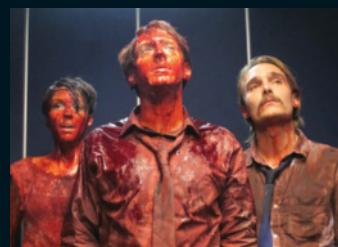
Work sucks

Details 15 // 86 mins // 2015 // **DVD** // **Released** 16 May **Director** Brian James O'Connell **Cast** Fran Kranz, Emma Fitzpatrick, Joey Kern, Pedro Pascal
Distributor Entertainment One



Office drones get the lifeblood quite literally sucked out of them in this frequently funny comedy from the Dr God team.

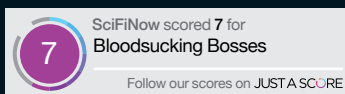
Downtrodden dweeb Evan (*The Cabin In The Woods*' Fran Kranz) has just been dumped by his girlfriend, Amanda (Emma Fitzpatrick), when he's passed over for promotion in favour of old college enemy Max (*Game Of Thrones*' Pedro Pascal). When Evan finds out that Max's secret for improving productivity is turning everyone into vampires, he must step up.



The movie (which went by the moniker *Bloodsucking Bastards* on the festival circuit) doesn't bother with attempting to hide its influences, but it's a mostly funny take on *Office Space*, accompanied by plenty of Sam Raimi splatter (exploding vampires!) and a good cast. Kranz is an old hand at this now, and *Super Troopers*' Joey Kern is particularly funny as Evan's slacker buddy.

This isn't as gut-bustingly hilarious as it could have been, but the relationships between the characters are oddly endearing, there's some well-observed workplace awfulness and there are more than enough chuckles to recommend giving it a go.

Jonathan Hatfull



DOOMWATCH

Island terrors

Details PG // 92 mins // 1972 // **Released** 20 June **Director** Peter Sasdy
Cast Ian Bannen, Judy Geeson, Percy Herbert, George Sanders
Distributor Screenbound Pictures



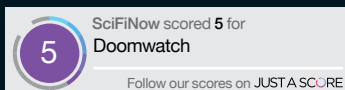
It's a prospect that fans of Seventies cautionary sci-fi fable *Doomwatch* must have been relishing: a feature-length presentation. However, while the thematic links to the show remain, there's disappointingly little of the gang themselves, largely sidelined by newcomers Dr Del Shaw (Ian Bannen) and his helper, Victoria Brown (Judy Geeson).

Furthermore, it just doesn't feel like a movie. Surely the idea of a film

is to raise the stakes somewhat, but you never really get that here, as the central plot (Shaw investigating a case of poisoning causing an isolated island community to become deformed and dangerous) isn't really all that different from what went on in the main series. As a result, this just feels like an extended television episode with none of the fan service.

Despite the story being reasonably serviceable in and of itself, it all just comes across as an attempt to pump up viewing figures by putting the *Doomwatch* name to a different use. It's not bad by any means, but undoubtedly still a letdown.

Steve Wright





SYMPTOMS

Getting away from all your troubles

Details 15 // 94 mins // 1974 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** José Ramón Larraz **Cast** Angela Pleasence, Peter Vaughn, Lorna Heilbron, Nancy Nevison **Distributor** BFI



This long overdue restoration of Britain's 1974 entry for Cannes' Palme D'Or reveals a heady mix of horror and mystery that will reward the patient viewer. Directed and co-written by José Ramón Larraz, the film tells the story of Helen (Angela Pleasence), who has invited her friend Anne (Lorna Heilbron) to come with her to her house in the country.

Helen is determined that they have a peaceful break from the hustle and bustle of London, but the local handyman Brady (Peter Vaughn) won't stop staring at her, and Anne becomes convinced that there's someone else in the house. As Helen becomes more and more unstable, Anne moves towards the brink of a horrifying discovery.

Larraz keeps the audience guessing as to what exactly is going on for the bulk of the film, establishing a bewitching atmosphere that borders on folk horror while hinting at some terrible traumatic event in Helen's past. There are bumps in the night, strange

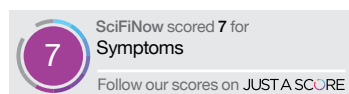
apparitions and an attic that obviously has plenty of secrets to give up, and the air of uncertainty is hugely impressive.

At the centre of it all is a brilliant performance from Pleasence as Helen, contributing beautifully to the air of uncertainty with a hypnotic and unreadable turn. She's capably supported by Heilbron as the caring Anne, and Vaughn (*Game Of Thrones*) as the intrusive handyman who knows a lot more about Helen than Anne does.

The BFI's lovely reissue contains two excellent documentaries about Larraz, one of which focuses on this and his next best-known film *Vampyres*, and fascinating interviews with Pleasence (who's very open about what she had to endure at the hands of her director, including a potentially life-threatening injury), Heilbron and editor Brian Smedley-Aston.

Although there are problems with the pacing, and the slow-burn nature of it may put off some viewers, *Symptoms* is a beguiling tale of madness that makes excellent use of its location and star to create something that is unsettling but absolutely watchable. Seek it out.

Jonathan Hatfull



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...



The Falling
A tale of an outbreak of fainting fit at a girls' school in the sixties blends folk horror and magical realism.

BURIAL GROUND

Etruscan archaeology gone wrong

Details 18 // 85 mins // 1981 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Directors** Andrea Bianchi **Cast** Karin Well, Gianluigi Chirizzi, Simone Mattioli **Distributor** 88 Films



Andrea Bianchi's Italian zombie movie has been lovingly dusted off by 88 Films for the enjoyment of die-hard Euro splatter fans and the curious, for who it's probably best known for its casting of an adult dwarf as a child. But does it have anything to offer beyond that weird bit of trivia and the undead hands rummaging around in the stomachs of the living?

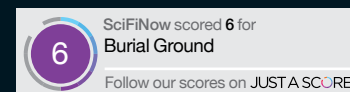
Yes and no. Although there are things here that are dull in a

standard way, such as the setup, the characterisation and the treatment of women, there are some good set pieces and a nice air of dread, the zombie effects are genuinely stomach-turning (plenty of Fulci-esque creepy crawlies and satisfyingly dusty dismemberment), and the Etruscan element is a nice surprise.

There's an incest subplot that is only there for transgressive titillation and a particularly unpleasant gore effect, but if you're taking a trip to *Burial Ground*, you probably know what you're getting into.

It's a strong Blu-ray release for a film that's a mixed bag, but not without a certain gruesome appeal.

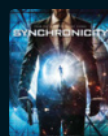
Jonathan Hatfull



SYNCHRONICITY

All the time in the world

Details 15 // 101 mins // 2015 // **DVD** // **Released** Out now **Director** Jacob Gentry **Cast** Chad McKnight, AJ Bowen, Brianne Davis, Scott Poythress, Michael Ironside **Distributor** Altitude



Ambition isn't in short supply in the latest effort from *The Signal* director Jacob Gentry, with *Synchronicity* following the drama-filled exploits of troubled physicist Jim (Chad McKnight), who finds himself embroiled in the kind of conundrums you would expect of somebody who has just invented a time machine.

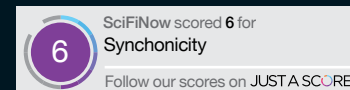
Bearing worthy comparison with Shane Carruth's *Primer*,

Synchronicity is a similarly unforgiving watch for those who aren't paying proper attention. Blink and you will miss an important development or a vital facitile, the non-linear styling of the narrative ultimately meaning that you are kept on your toes at all time as a viewer.

Sometimes you get the idea that a longer cut would have resulted in a film that was better than the sum of its parts, but unfortunately that isn't the case here.

Still, it's a solid effort from Gentry, who yet again marks himself out as someone to watch. We'll keep an eye out.

Steve Wright



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SHOW INFO

Released

Out now

Year Made

2016

Certificate

15

Creator

Drew Goddard

Cast

Charlie Cox, Deborah Ann Woll, Elden Henson, Jon Bernthal, Elodie Yung

Distributor

Netflix

Running Time

708 mins

Format

NETFLIX



WHAT A MARVEL

What's next for Netflix's Marvel dramas?

Luke Cage

Sweet Christmas, Mike Colter's solo run isn't far away now. After his triumphant debut in *Jessica Jones*, the *Luke Cage* series will air on 30 September 2016.

Jessica Jones

A second season has been confirmed, with showrunner Melissa Rosenberg expected to return. However, it might have to be after *The Defenders* in 2017.

Iron Fist

There's no air date yet, but showrunner Scott Buck (*Dexter*) has found his star in *Game Of Thrones*' Finn Jones.

The Defenders

Again, no air date, but Melissa Rosenberg's comments that this series has to happen by a certain date suggests it could come shortly after *Iron Fist*.

The Punisher

No confirmation yet that this is even happening, but we've got our fingers crossed.



Season Two

DAREDEVIL

Crime and Punisher

The first season of *Daredevil* came as something of a shock. No one really thought that a Marvel TV show could be that gritty, have such a complex villain or have people getting decapitated by car doors. But following its acclaimed debut and that of the arguably superior *Jessica Jones*, expectations for *Daredevil* Season Two were high, especially with the promised introductions of Frank Castle, aka the Punisher (Jon Bernthal) and Elektra (Elodie Yung).

Things get off to a hell of a start with the former's bullet-riddled grand entrance, just when Matt Murdock (Charlie Cox) was starting to feel like he'd got things together. The arrival of a vigilante who doesn't think twice about cold-blooded killing sends a shockwave through Hell's Kitchen. Matt's colleagues Foggy (Elden Henson) and Karen (Deborah Ann Woll) end up in the middle of some shady DA dealings, and Matt is forced to confront the question of how far he'll go.

Then there's Elektra, who arrives to tell Matt that the Yakuza are back in town, and quickly coaxes him into some old-times ass-kicking. But is there something even more sinister behind their reappearance?

For the most part, our high expectations were met. New showrunners Douglas Petrie and Marco Ramirez both worked as writers on the first season, and there is a sense of issues being addressed, specifically with regards pacing. Although there is a lull roughly halfway through (apparently a Netflix standard), it's not as protracted as its predecessors. It helps that everyone's being kept very busy, and not just Matt Murdock. Karen finds unexpected common ground with Castle as Woll continues to impress, Foggy realises he's a better lawyer than he thinks he is (okay, that one's probably the weak link), and Matt is pulled in all directions by his various commitments.

At its worst, this very busy mix gets a bit messy. The Elektra storyline is frustratingly inconsistent, with the show's reflex 'we need something to fill this dead space' reaction seeming to come in the form of throwing wave after wave of ninjas at her and Daredevil. However, when the script gives her something to do, Yung definitely makes the most of it, and it feels like she grows into the role.

But as you would probably expect, Season Two's real ace in the hole is Bernthal. As much as Vincent D'Onofrio's Kingpin proved to be the highlight of last year's run, Bernthal dominates these 13 episodes with a magnetic and complex performance that fits the show's dark and violent tone perfectly. There's more than enough here to justify a solo run for the character, as we see both his inability to move past the tragic loss of his family and his unflinching approach to putting down the 'scum' of the city.

He's so good that you miss him when he's not there, especially as the show takes a definite step towards the less grounded mythology of the comics in its second half. The arrival of The Hand is quite a bold move for a show so committed to its crime-procedural realism, and can't help but feel a bit daft when the Punisher is carving his way through a prison corridor full of murderers. It also suffers compared to the welcome return of some of the first season's characters (all hail Rosario Dawson) and the overdue first attempts at cross-pollination with the *Defenders*.

It doesn't all work, and there are still problems to be fixed (the dialogue seems worse this season), but there is more than enough here to recommend a second trip to Hell's Kitchen. Basically, Frank Castle.

Jonathan Hatfull



SciFiNow scored **7** for **Daredevil: Season Two**

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Jessica Jones
Krysten Ritter is superb as the alcoholic PI with a dark past as Netflix tackles some surprisingly complex issues.

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Series One

BEOWULF: RETURN TO THE SHIELDLANDS

Should have stayed away

Details 12 // 526 mins // 2016 // **DVD** // Out now **Creators** James Dormer, Michael A Walker **Cast** Kieran Bew, Gísli Örn Garðarsson, Joanne Whalley, Ed Speleers, Laura Donnelly **Distributor** ITV Studios



For all the grandeur surrounding the Old English epic saga, *Beowulf* hasn't exactly had the best treatment with regards adaptations, with Robert Zemeckis's patchy Ray Winstone-starrer being its most memorable iteration to date. Yet for all its faults, we suspect that it's infinitely more memorable than *Beowulf: Return To The Shieldlands*.

Seeing the titular warrior (Kieran Bew) return to his adopted homeland alongside his childhood friend Breca (Gísli Örn Garðarsson), he discovers it in the grips of a tense power struggle after the death of his guardian Hrothgar (William Hurt) between his widow (Joanne Whalley) and her brother (Elliot Cowan), who has his sights set firmly on the Shieldlands.

In truth, the above paragraph presents a mere snippet of the action: simultaneously there are feuds, love affairs and unspoken, simmering resentment – plus atrocious CGI

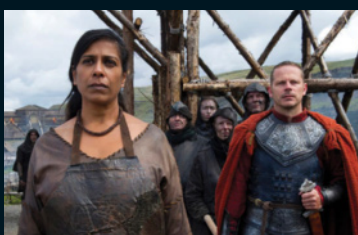
monsters that will have you fondly recalling the days of *Primeval*.

Having a lot going on isn't necessarily a bad thing, but it is if it distracts from the main plot, which is sadly often the case here. There are so many little subplots and side-quests that the central story comes across almost as an afterthought, to be hastily revisited in later episodes.

And then there's Beowulf himself. It's hard to recall as unmemorable a protagonist as the one here, with his mate Breca coming across as far more charismatic and relatable. Other characters fare better: Ed Speleers adds a surprising amount of layers to self-entitled heir, Slean, and Lolita Chakrabarti is good value as eager-to-prove-herself Lila. Apart from them, everyone else is distinctly mundane.

There's some potentially interesting ground to head into, with some final-act revelations that hew far closely to the original story. Pity they couldn't have done it sooner.

Steve Wright



SciFiNow scored 4 for *Beowulf: Return To The Shieldlands*

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Hercules: The Legendary Journeys
Far more memorable; we recommend revisiting this instead.



Season One

SHADOWHUNTERS

Magic magic

Details 15 // 564 mins // 2016 // **TV** // Out now **Creator** Ed Decter **Cast** Katherine McNamara, Dominic Sherwood, Alberto Rosende, Matthew Daddario, Emeraude Toubia, Harry Shum Jr, Isaiah Mustafa **Distributor** Netflix



Prospective New

York art student Clary Fray (Katherine McNamara) is just trying to celebrate her seemingly normal 18th

birthday with her best friend Simon (Alberto Rosende), but when her mother is kidnapped, she finds out she's a Shadowhunter, and realises things can never go back to the way they were.

To rescue her mum, Clary needs to travel to the Shadow World, train with other Shadowhunters and fight evil forces. If it sounds a bit stupid, that's only because it is. But it's hard to tell if that's a good or a bad thing.

The first few episodes are pretty lame, but the line between lame and good begins to get blurry somewhere between episodes four and six. Maybe the magic, fluff and pairings will grate on some, but all those things are also the juicy bait that draw others in

There's nothing overtly special about *Shadowhunters*; the performances are alright, the magical effects are standard, and the plot is regular. But once you get into the swing of things and start to understand how the world operates, the characters begin to reveal themselves as the show's main selling point.

Unless your heart is literally made of limestone, it gets harder not to care



about Clary, Simon, Alec, Magnus or even bloody Raphael.

Once the show has successfully reeled you in, you probably won't care about the fate of the Mortal Cup or whatever other MacGuffin they are all supposed to be retrieving. But you'll care about the fates of your favourite characters. You'll actually care a lot.

You'll either hate *Shadowhunters* or find yourself completely invested in it. You'll want to punch the entire cast in the face, or end up crying into a mug of lukewarm hot chocolate while hitting 'next episode' at three in the morning with no idea how you got there.

Poppy-Jay Palmer

SciFiNow scored 7 for *Shadowhunters: Season One*

Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

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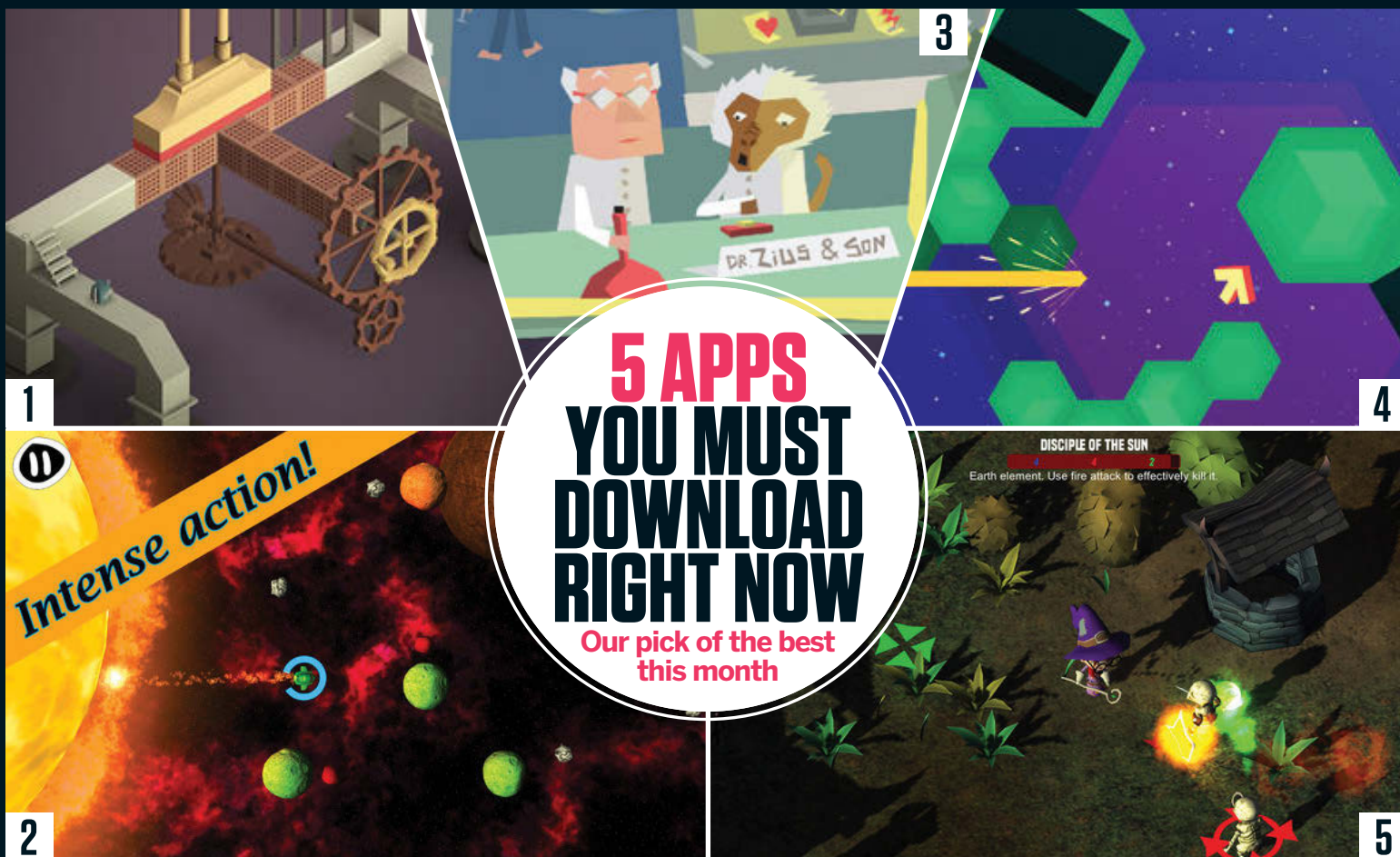
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FOR: IOS/ANDROID
PRICE: FREE



3 As the self-professed "funniest ragdoll game of all the galaxies," endless arcade shooter *Waste In Space* will keep you occupied and chortling for hours. Set in space (obviously), the aim is to collect as much floating space trash as you can. It sounds like a horrible chore, but it's really not. The gameplay is fun, fast-paced and unlike anything you've played before, and the graphics, fun characters and gravity hats are always delightful and hilarious.

BEST FOR: TRASH COLLECTORS



SPARKWAVE

FOR: IOS/ANDROID
PRICE: FREE



4 You can never have enough new space-based apps, and *Sparkwave* by Crescent Moon Games is one of the best. This hex-styled twitch game continues to be engaging, addictive and visually stunning from start to finish. It's also pretty challenging. The objective is to go the greatest distance you can go without bumping into obstacles while also staying on the track. It's quite repetitive, but once you get into the swing of it, it's difficult to stop.

BEST FOR: ROAD RUNNERS



FANTASY MAGE

FOR: IOS/ANDROID
PRICE: £0.79/\$0.99



5 Action role-playing and hack-'n'-slash worlds collide in *Fantasy Mage* from Illogical. Get your daily fantasy fix as you fight off armies of skeletons, cast magic spells, face your enemies and collect wizardly loot. Learn the rules of the mage life, build up your skills (and your collection of prizes) and exploit your enemies' weaknesses in order to use them against them. It's a dog-eat-dog world when you try to master the way of *Fantasy Mage*.

BEST FOR: FANTASY FREAKS



92 Essential Read

Starship Troopers

SciFiNow
Book Club

Issue 121's Essential Read:
The Sword Of Shannara
by Terry Brooks

Join in and share your thoughts on
Twitter or Facebook







Essential read: Starship Troopers

Robert A Heinlein's classic novel was more ambitious and adult than anything he had attempted: a response to a world divided by conflict and war

WORDS MATTHEW HANDRAHAN

Whatever else you might think of Robert A Heinlein, he was by most accounts a warm and thoughtful man. In 1955, *More Than Human* author Theodore Sturgeon sent Heinlein a letter complaining of writer's block. The response arrived promptly; a cavalcade of ideas and concepts, with a cheque for \$100 clipped to the edge of the stack. Heinlein's note read, 'I have a suspicion your credit is bent.'

"It is very difficult for words like 'thank you' to handle a man that can do a thing like that," Sturgeon recalled in 1962, and he was far from alone. Around 20 years later, no less a writer than Ray Bradbury sent Heinlein a letter. "Your influence on us all, from 1939 on, cannot be measured," Bradbury wrote. "I can only say I remember, warmly, your many kindnesses to me when I was 19, 20, 21 years old. That man basked in your light, and will continue to be grateful for the help you offered when I was so poor and needful."

When Philip K Dick was in the grip of tremendous financial and emotional pressure, Heinlein offered financial assistance and emotional support. Dick dedicated a book to Heinlein and his wife as a token of appreciation. "That is the best in humanity, there; that is who and what I love," Dick wrote, pointing out that Heinlein's generosity was all the more remarkable for what they each represented. Dick was a 'flipped-out freak'; Heinlein was regarded as patriotic and right-wing. Looking back, *Starship Troopers* was a big part of the reason why. The reality, as ever, is more complicated.

Heinlein's politics shifted numerous times throughout his life, but that he wrote a novel like *Starship Troopers* should come as no surprise. He attended the United States Naval Academy from the age of 17, graduating five years later. He served on the USS Lexington and USS Roper before being discharged in 1934 due to ill health. He

had experimented with writing, but assumed that his life would be spent in the Navy. With that no longer a possibility, and a disability pension to help pay the bills, he was free to develop his writing into a paying job. Frederick Pohl, a fellow SF writer and close friend, later said that the Navy's "old-fashioned and sometimes amusing notions of honour" stayed with Heinlein. "Throughout his life, honour was of major importance," Pohl said.

Heinlein came late to science fiction, selling his first story in 1939 when he was already in his 30s. Working with the legendary John Campbell, Heinlein rose to the peak of the craft within a few years, buoyed by a deep knowledge of early science fiction, a peerless work ethic and a knack for writing quickly. "They didn't want it good," he said in a 1980 interview in the *New York Times*. "They wanted it Wednesday."

Just as Heinlein had become immersed in writing though, his old allegiance to the military was called

upon again. The US entered World War II in December 1941, and Heinlein wasted no time, contacting the Navy Personnel Office to request his return to active duty – albeit unsuccessfully. Instead, he found a civilian position as the head of the Naval Air Experimental Station in Philadelphia. He recommended that fellow writers Isaac Asimov and L Sprague De Camp be permitted to serve their country in the same way, and ultimately worked on what would become the space-suit used in the Apollo missions.

Heinlein was surrounded by the mechanisation that now defined warfare, and that would reach a previously unfathomable extreme as a means to bring about an end to the fighting. After the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Heinlein resigned, understanding that such a display of power would surely be 'the end' of the war.

When Heinlein returned to writing, he did so with a new market in mind. ➤



SYNOPSIS

Juan 'Johnnie' Rico wants to be a citizen, whether his family likes it or not. Only citizens get to vote, and only citizens are allowed

to be in government. Citizens may be volunteers, but they get to guide and change the world. The rest have to settle for what's left.

But that honour comes as the result of sacrifice: service to the Terran Federation, and there have been safer times to fight for the cause. A conflict with the inhabitants of the planet Klendathu is threatening Earth, and the Federation's mobile infantry is the first line of defence.

Before he can fight, however, Rico must first survive basic training. If you don't resign, if the instructors don't cut you, and if you aren't flogged for making a mistake, you might die in training. Nine out of ten make it. Those that do fight the bugs.

As Johnnie makes his way up the ranks of the Terran Federation, the war changes his world forever.



"THROUGHOUT
HIS LIFE, HONOUR
WAS OF MAJOR
IMPORTANCE"
FREDERICK POHL

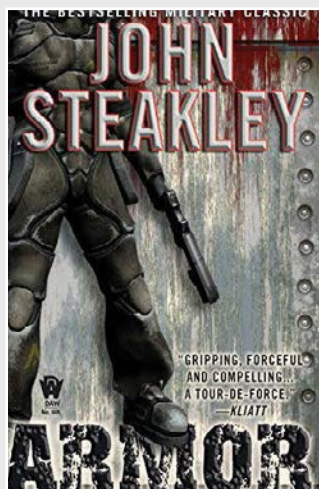
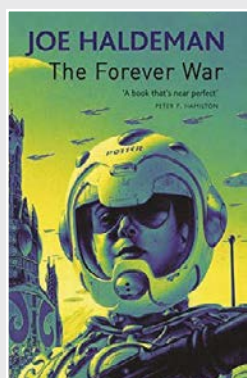
Heinlein's novel was adapted by Paul Verhoeven for his 1997 feature film.

Where Have I Seen This Before?

A QUESTIONABLE FUTURE

THE FOREVER WAR ▶

Military science fiction comes in many flavours, and Joe Haldeman's is every bit as satisfying as Heinlein's. Haldeman drew from his personal experiences in Vietnam and its aftermath for his 1974 classic. *Starship Troopers* was certainly an influence, but *The Forever War* feels more like a mirror image; as well suited to the ambiguities of the Vietnam era as *Troopers* was to the moral certitude of post-war US.

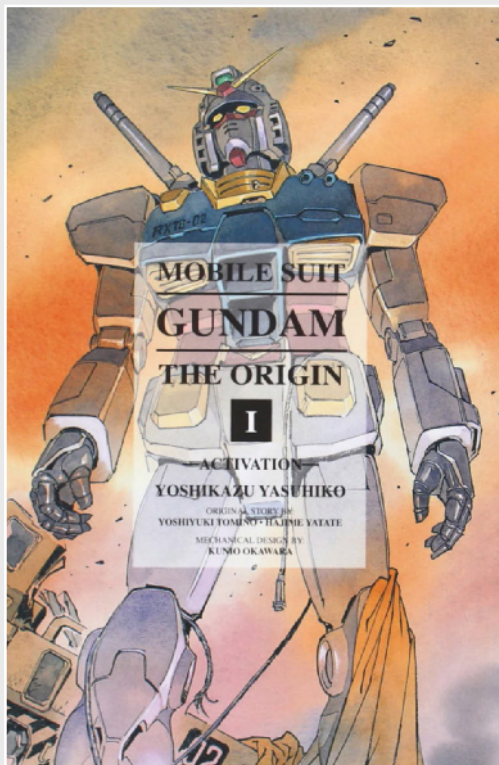


◀ ARMOR

As you might expect from its title, this 1984 novel also follows Heinlein's vision of mechanised future warfare. *Armor*'s enemy threat is insectoid in appearance too, generally referred to as 'ants' by the human characters. John Steakley's focus is less on the hardware though, shifting emphasis to war's psychological impact on soldiers.

STARSHIP TROOPERS ▶

Oddly, the one place you definitely won't see any power armour is in Paul Verhoeven's 1997 adaptation; an entertaining movie in its own right, but one that aggravated Heinlein devotees. Frankly, it isn't hard to see why. The *RoboCop* director didn't even read the book, and ultimately made his own film with a smattering of Heinlein's names and ideas to justify keeping the title. Purists may disagree, but Verhoeven's movie is still excellent fun.



MOBILE SUIT GUNDAM ▶

Though the concept of a powered exoskeleton had existed for decades, the book's success introduced it to the world. Yoshiyuki Tomino's *Mobile Suit Gundam* is just one example of that trend, 'mobile suit' being derived from Heinlein's 'mobile infantry'.

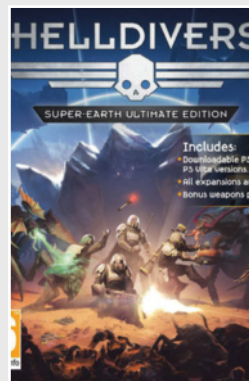


◀ ALIENS

James Cameron has made no secret about the inspiration he took from Heinlein's novel, making it a reference point for the way the colonial marines' talked, looked and engaged the enemy. The phrase 'bug hunt' was taken directly from *Starship Troopers*, and Ripley's iconic Power Loader is another of culture's great mechanised exoskeletons.

HELLDIVERS ▶

Military science fiction has proved fertile ground for game developers, and you can see the influence of *Starship Troopers* in dozens of videogames, like *Halo*, *Gears Of War*, *Lost Planet*, and so on. Most recently, Arrowhead Studios placed *Helldivers* in the middle ground between Heinlein's novel and Verhoeven's movie. A fine idea, as anyone who has played the game will agree.



Working with Charles Scribner's & Sons, he began a string of novels aimed at a younger audience, starting with *Rocket Ship Galileo* in 1947. These are now referred to as Heinlein's 'juveniles', and he would continue along the same path for over a decade. The books did a great deal for his commercial appeal and popular standing, and this is generally accepted as his prime motivation for writing them. However, they are also notable for pushing the boundaries of what was considered appropriate in genre fiction aimed at a younger audience. The ideas, themes and science were all more sophisticated than what had gone before.

This was due to a change in the way Heinlein perceived an author's responsibility in a world with global warfare and atomic weapons. Writing to a fan, Forrest Ackerman, whose brother had been killed in combat, Heinlein stressed the need for survivors to ensure that such sacrifice ensured a "better world is accomplished." Ackerman was seeking a contribution for a sci-fi anthology in his brother's memory, and Heinlein's response suggests a man at war with his own profession.

"I know that you are solemn in your intention to see to it that Alden's sacrifice does not become meaningless. I am unable to believe that fan activity and fan publications can have anything to do with such intent," Heinlein wrote. "I have read the fan publications you have sent me and, with rare exceptions, I find myself utterly disgusted with the way the active fans have met the trial of this war. Many of them are neither in the army nor in war work... These bastards let your brother die, Forry, and did not lift a hand to help him. I mean that literally. The war in Europe would have been over if all the slackers in this country had been trying to help out - would have been over before the date on which your brother died."

That letter was written a year before the publication of *Rocket Ship Galileo*, and it closes with the assertion that, to avoid similar catastrophes in the future, each individual must labour in their own way. "Political activity of every sort, writing intended to stir people up, the willingness to combat race hatred, discrimination, limitations of civil liberty, generalised hates of every sort, whenever and wherever they show up."

Is this why Heinlein returned from the war with a renewed interest in reaching a larger number of impressionable minds? The relatively challenging content of the subsequent books would certainly lend credence



Robert A Heinlein signing books at WorldCon in 1976.



The *Starship Troopers* film is notoriously unlike the book.

to that idea, and the trend reached a crescendo with *Starship Troopers*.

In April 1958, Heinlein read a newspaper advert calling for an end to the testing of nuclear weapons. In the years since Hiroshima and Nagasaki, escalating paranoia around communism and the power of the Soviet Union had convinced Heinlein that a nuclear deterrent was essential. When Dwight Eisenhower, then president of the United States, started to discuss a treaty to ban testing, Heinlein felt moved to take action. He put one new novel aside, and started another.

"I am convinced in my own mind that the United States is washed up and we will cease to exist inside of five to fifteen years – unless we quickly and drastically pull up our socks, both at home and in foreign policy," he wrote in a letter to his agent. "This opinion has been growing in my mind for years: I was simply triggered into doing something about it by this pacifistic-internationalist-cum-clandestine Communist drive to have us treat atomics and disarmament in exactly the fashion the Kremlin has tried to get us to do for the past 12 years."

Starship Troopers mixed ideas about individual responsibility with his views on the importance of the military in maintaining order and peace. The novel's weapons and armour technology were extrapolated from his experiences at the Naval Air Experimental Station, all packaged together in a way that would still be digestible to young boys. "It is an adult novel about an 18-year-old boy," Heinlein wrote in another letter to his agent. "I have followed my own theory that intelligent youngsters are in fact more interested in weighty matters than their parents usually are."

Scribner's didn't see it that way, and rejected the manuscript. Heinlein was angered by the dismissal of his ideas, but also saw it as confirmation that they needed to be heard. *Starship Troopers* was eventually published as a serial in *The Magazine Of Fantasy And Science Fiction* at the end of 1959. Its impact was immediate. Some proclaimed it the start of a new era for science fiction, while others decried it as militaristic, authoritarian and even a little fascist, but pretty much everyone read it.

It also signalled the end of the perception of Heinlein as a writer of

'juveniles', and the start of the often negative appraisal of his political views. Take *Starship Troopers* in isolation, and you could be forgiven for adopting that stance, but in the context of his obvious human decency and the content of the novels that followed, it becomes clear that Heinlein is not as morally simplistic as his critics would have you believe.

Stranger In A Strange Land, the book he interrupted to write *Starship Troopers*, was published in 1961, challenging society's repressive ideas while advocating polygamy and free love. *The Moon Is A Harsh Mistress* (1966) depicted the anarchistic overthrow of the ruling class in a lunar colony. *Starship Troopers* can only be regarded as indicative of Heinlein's political view if it forms a coherent picture with his other work. Frankly, that couldn't be further from the case.

"Any competent fiction writer can assume many roles, many points of view, any age, either sex," Heinlein wrote in a letter. "If he can't do this he had better get into some other trade."

Anyone with a love of science fiction can be grateful that Heinlein didn't follow his own advice.

ESSENTIAL READ

Starship Troopers



Your Take On The Classic

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



"I felt it was a sci-fi book about soldiers for soldiers. It was what happens if the military take control of everything!" @BrizzleLass



"An interesting novel though some will find it hard to get into as over half of the book relates to the heroes basic training." @VidarRaven



"Enjoyed this book but it would be difficult to get into for most, especially if they're expecting the book to reflect the film." @thecyphercmd



"Good story but spoiled for me by the fact it is basically propaganda for Heinlein's horrible, right-wing politics" @Tim_McNulty



"A dull, clunky boot camp story pretending to be SF adventure, interspersed with equally dull authorial lectures." @isambardsmith



"One of my favorite sci fi novels, it's a grueling coming of age and discovery story for Rico" @jwvangogh



"I liked the coming of age elements a LOT. I also taught it side by side w/ *Forever War* and really loved student response." @JaneLindskold



"Honestly, didn't care for it. Lots of social commentary which I understand, but I just found it to be boring." @eyesandbooks



"Always fascinating to read a story from an intelligent author with a completely-different political stance to what we're used to." @DayHWStoodStill



"Timeless story gives you a slice of cold war fears the hope we will be a unified race someday and insight into bonds of shared adv." @berekmorgil7



"One of the great military novels (We'll ignore 'WHAMBO!'). Just so happens it's SF too! The film is a fun parody of the book :)" @scapecy

What do you think? Let us know on Twitter or Facebook



Which sub-genre
would you like to
see tackled next?

Let us know on Twitter
or Facebook



A Beginner's Guide To

Weird Fiction

Everything you need to know about eldritch terror, colours out of space and the fear of the cosmic

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

What comes to mind when you think of weird fiction? It's probably Cthulhu isn't it? The terrifying old god whose very image drives men to madness and reminds us that there are terrifying, unknowable things out there in the dark.

HP Lovecraft is indeed the grandfather of weird fiction, and its problematic patron saint (his fear of the unknown was coupled with a fear of non-Anglo Saxons and women), but it does not begin and end with gods and fish men. It's not even limited to horror. It's the kind of story that can't easily be classified, slipping between horror, sci-fi and fantasy.

Many of the first examples of weird fiction are very much progressions of Gothic horror, with many regarding Edgar Allan Poe as one of its progenitors, but rather than focusing on dark secrets or conventional monsters, the terror in weird fiction comes from something more incomprehensible. Authors' interests in everything from astrology to Greek mythology could be used to create a distinct and terrifying dread, to bring something almost familiar but totally incomprehensible. It's a slippery category, but you certainly know it when you see it. Dip your toe into the work of Lord Dunsany, Algernon

Blackwood or Clark Ashton Smith, and you'll understand how hard it was for us to pick just five stories.

Readers in the Twenties on the hunt for something different from the usual horror or sci-fi fare would have found what they were looking for in the pages of *Weird Tales*, which began in 1923 and ran until 1954. Authors like Robert E Howard, Robert

Bloch, Lovecraft (of course) and even Tennessee Williams could be found behind its wonderfully lurid covers. These stories would inspire a legion of authors, and weird fiction is still very much flourishing today with authors like Jeff Vandermeer, Kelly Link and, perhaps most famously, China Miéville continuing to push at the boundaries of genre.

HP Lovecraft's weird fiction has inspired many tales, both on page and screen.



Alternate history tropes

Things to look out for...



Fear of the unknown

Although not all weird fiction is horror, some of its greatest and most famous works have been situated in that genre. The idea of an ancient or all-powerful force lingering just out of sight is a classic weird fiction trope.

New ideas



The genre originated at the end of the 19th century as authors pushed at the edges of pre-existing genres, determined to create something original. Authors like Franz Kafka served as an inspiration to blend not only literary forms, but also new scientific theories.

Short fiction



The best of the early works of weird fiction tend to be short stories or novellas rather than full-blown novels, published in literary magazines for the discerning reader. Of course, that's all changed now, with authors like China Miéville delivering weird fiction doorstops.

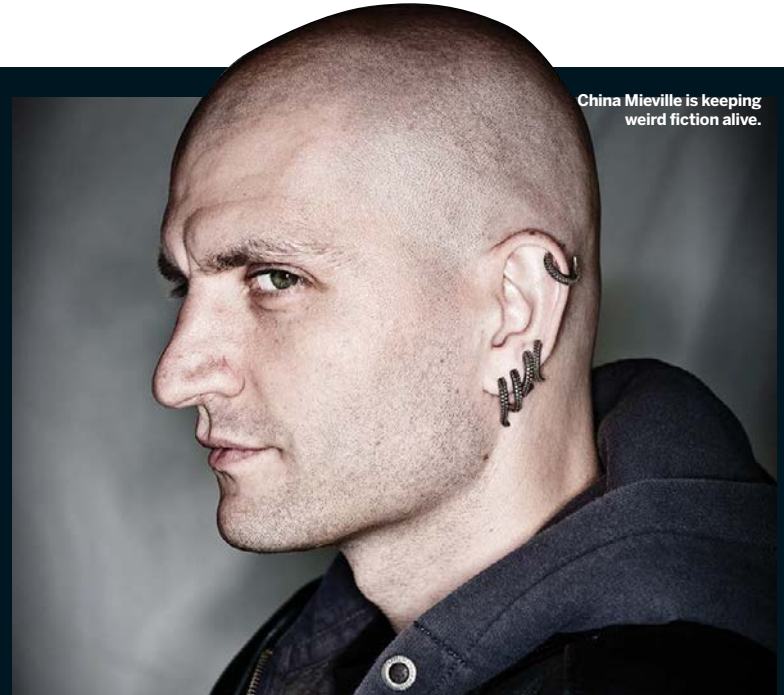
Doom



Things don't tend to end well. You don't just discover something unknowable or stumble across a dangerous new discovery and walk away happy. At best, you leave certain in the knowledge that you're never going back. At worst, death, madness or the end of the world.



Robert W Chambers was recently homaged in HBO's *True Detective*.



China Miéville is keeping weird fiction alive.

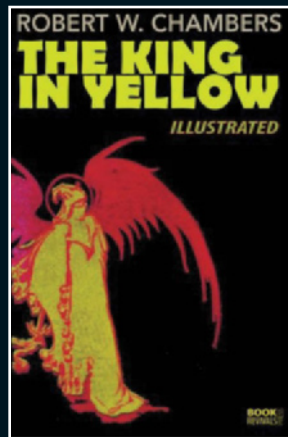


Haunted house

Terror and pig creatures

THE HOUSE ON THE BORDERLAND
 Author: William Hope Hodgson
 Publisher: Night Shade Books
 Published: 1908
 Price: £5.60 (Kindle)
 One of the first leading lights of weird fiction, William Hope Hodgson is arguably best known for his brilliant series of stories about occult detective Carnacki. *The House On The Borderland* was his first novel, told as a manuscript that is found in the ruins of a house that details the attack from terrifying creatures, before journeying into space as the narrator is shown the end of this universe, finding raw horror in the cosmic.

“Have recently discovered the works of William Hope Hodgson. Must say *The House on the Borderland* is utterly disturbing.” @levacass

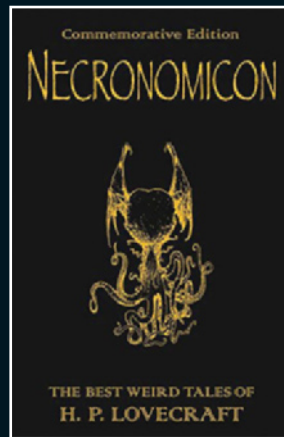


Yellow sign

You're in Carcosa now

THE KING IN YELLOW
 Author: Robert W. Chambers
 Publisher: CreateSpace Independent Publishing
 Published: 1895
 Price: £6.41
 Back in pop culture consciousness thanks to *True Detective*, Chambers' collection of linked short stories takes the reader through a series of terrifying tales in which a play called *The King In Yellow* recurs, as does the Yellow Sign and the King himself. A lot is left to the reader's imagination, and dread is absolutely palpable as Chambers conjures the air of it beautifully. But stranger still is lost Carcosa...

“It's batshit cray. Couldn't cope. #BookClub” @LibraryTasha

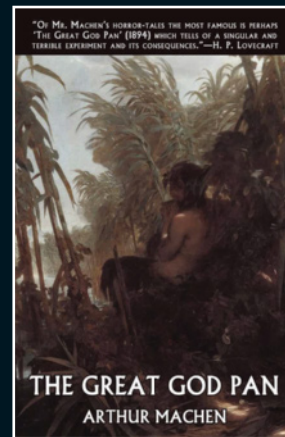


Dead Cthulhu

Lovecraft's masterpiece

AT THE MOUNTAINS OF MADNESS
 Author: HP Lovecraft
 Publisher: Gollancz
 Published: 1936
 Price: £25
 We really could have chosen any of Lovecraft's work, but there's a reason why *At The Mountains Of Madness* has endured to this extent. It's not the first appearance of dead Cthulhu, but it's arguably the most powerful, as an Antarctic expedition uncovers an abandoned city and the remnants of the Elder Things. The ancient unknown evil is so terrifying and incomprehensible that the only option is to run, or risk madness. Still absolutely stunning.

“It's a huge personal favourite. The tension it generates is sensational. Icily atmospheric, with a chilling pay-off. Love it!” @HippyDave

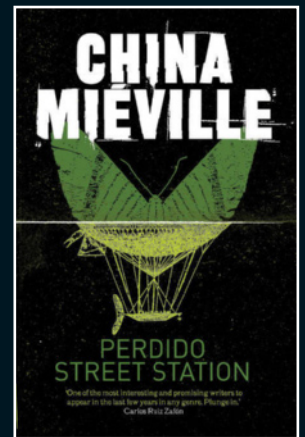


Elder gods

This way lies madness

THE GREAT GOD PAN
 Author: Arthur Machen
 Publisher: WLC
 Published: 1894
 Price: £9.99
 Arthur Machen's novella certainly kicked up a fuss on its release in 1894 owing to the sexuality of the tale, but its uncanny blend of horror, folklore and spirituality is what really gives it its power. The story begins with a surgical procedure to uncover greater spiritual awareness through brain surgery, but the operation instead creates a woman who is the child of the god Pan, who cuts a merry swathe through London's men. It heavily influenced Lovecraft and Stephen King.

“Long time ago, but I remember liking it, in a sort of mournful way. #BookClub” @JaneLindsfold



New weird

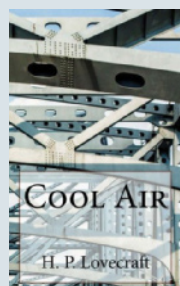
Metropolis and monsters

PERDIDO STREET STATION
 Author: China Miéville
 Publisher: Macmillan
 Published: 2000
 Price: £8.99
 It's hard to pick just one of China Miéville's novels, but the fact is that *Perdido Street Station* is impossible to categorise beyond weird fiction, and it is absolutely stunning. It's got mad science, magic, a heaving cityscape, artists, killers, Machiavellian schemers, and giant flying monsters that are basically unkillable. It's a great swarming beehive filled with ideas, blending sci-fi, horror, fantasy, speculative fiction and Miéville's own inimitable style.

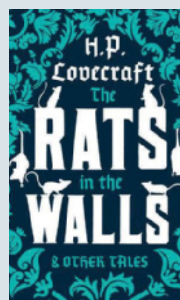
“I've read it and thought it was great. Well realised fantasy city, proper grubby feel. The races were excellent.” @GraphicalComms

Your Five Favourite First Contact Novels

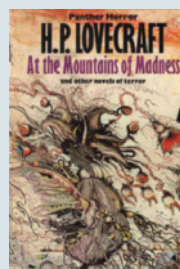
CHOOSE YOUR TOP FIVE
@SCIFINOW ON TWITTER



1. Cool Air
"The Hound is a brilliant grave robber tale and *The Cats Of Ulthar* has a great warning for cat owners. *Cool Air* has great suspense!"
@Mike333West



2. The Rats In The Walls
"Got to be *The Rats In The Walls*, still creeps me out a bit now almost 15 years after I first read it! #BookClub"
@bubbatronix



3. At The Mountains Of Madness
"Personally, *At The Mountains of Madness* is a stunning tale of supernatural fear." @Parsons Fiction



4. The Dream-Quest Of Unknown Kadath
The Dream-Quest Of Unknown Kadath because of the flying cats..."
@JardineRoss



5. The Case Of Charles Dexter Ward
"For me I always enjoyed *The Case of Charles Dexter Ward*. #BookClub"
@RichardA Young

Details Author: Matt Ruff Publisher: Harper Price: £18.97 Released: Out now

LOVECRAFT COUNTRY

The shadow over America

The list of authors inspired by the works of HP Lovecraft is nigh-on endless, but we can't remember the last time we read an homage this intelligent and entertaining. Matt Ruff offers plenty of weird fiction thrills and chills, but here he's using eldritch dread to explore a less supernatural American evil.

Told as a series of connected stories, *Lovecraft Country* spins a fittingly Lovecraftian tale of ancient others and ambitious sorcerers to tell a story about Jim Crow-era racism. Life in 1954 is dangerous enough for our characters as black men and women living in the US, even before they stumble upon

the Braithwaite family and their dark secrets. The book begins with returned veteran Atticus Turner travelling with his uncle George and old friend Letitia to find his father Montrose, who has disappeared while investigating an old piece of family history. It transpires that the Turners are connected to the Braithwaites, a wealthy East-Coast family with a keen interest in the occult and a plan for their guests.

The story acts as an introduction to the people whose lives are explored further in other tales, all of which use their supernatural element as a mirror for the mundane horrors our characters routinely face.

When Letitia buys a house in a white neighbourhood, she must contend with the unquiet spirit of the former occupant, as well as the locals, who will do anything to scare her away. The book containing the history of Atticus' great-grandmother's time in slavery becomes the leverage used by Caleb Braithwaite to convince Montrose to steal a book of spells. A living puppet is just another tool of intimidation to keep the terrified teenage Horace quiet.

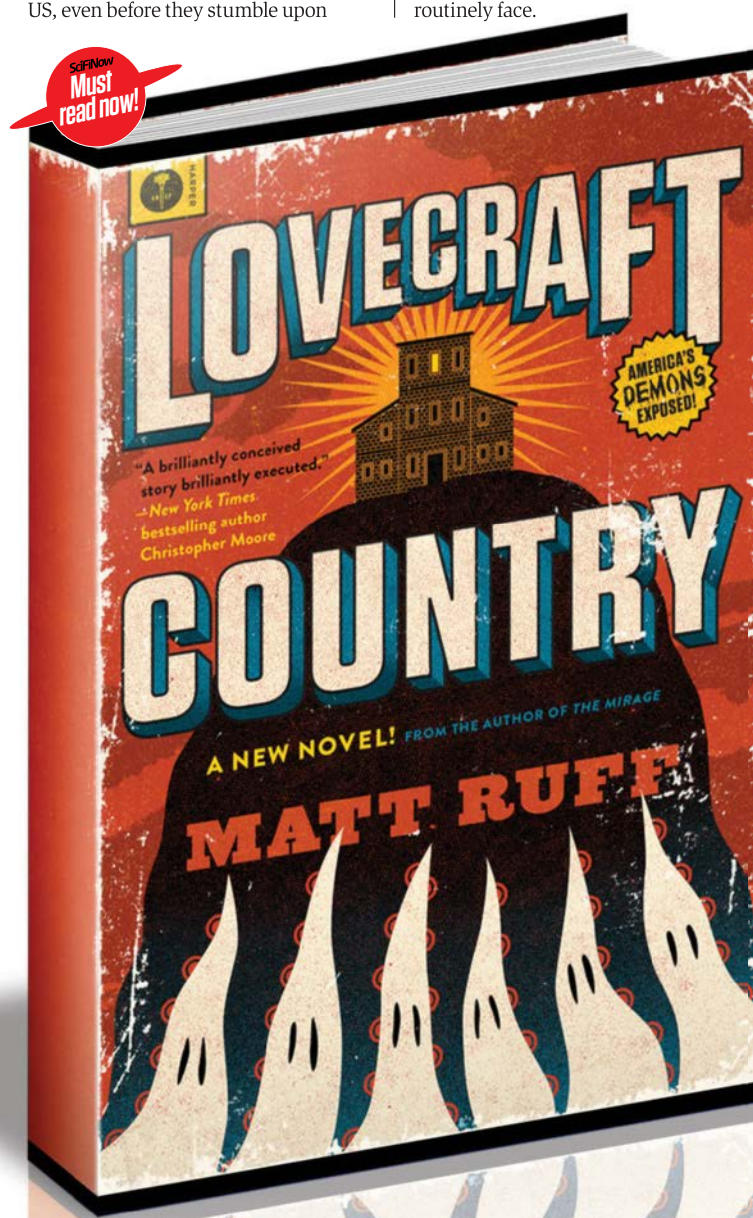
All these tales, from *Jekyll & Hyde* riffs to trips into other astral planes, function both as highly entertaining horror stories and canny depictions of a horrifying time in American history. The racism inherent in society at the time is violent and awful, and horribly mundane in its omnipresence. The supernatural, when present, is often a surprising respite from the dangers that come from simply walking down the street or driving into a different county.

Despite their near-constant peril, and the fact that the stories flit between different characters, Ruff does not fall into the trap of making his protagonists victims or ciphers. While some don't feel quite as vivid as others, there's a real sense of history and affection between them, and their victories are genuinely touching. One of our favourite stories, 'Hippolyta Disturbs The Universe', finds the titular character finally achieving her childhood astronomy dreams by stepping onto an alien shore.

There's also some sharp discussion of the problematic legacy of fantasy authors and the often-upsetting subtext to be found in these classic works, as genre fan Atticus is confronted with his father's disgusted reading of these tales. "They do disappoint me sometimes," his uncle George tells him. "Sometimes, they stab me right in the heart."

Rich, intelligent, sensitive and massively entertaining, this is an absolute pleasure.

Jonathan Hatfull



SciFiNow scored **9** for *Lovecraft Country*
Follow our scores on **JUST A SCORE**

IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...
The Ballad Of Black Tom
Victor LaValle
A New Yorker faces the forces of darkness in this Lovecraftian tale of racism and the supernatural.

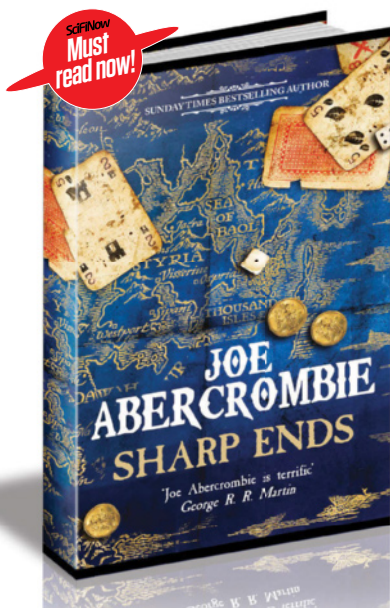


Details Author: Joe Abercrombie Publisher: Gollancz Price: £18.99 Released: Out now

SHARP ENDS

His law

Over the course of his various series set in the *First Law* universe, Joe Abercrombie has created a world able to stand alongside landscapes the likes of George RR Martin and JRR Tolkien have created in terms of drama, political intrigue and, of course, bloodshed.



In *Sharp Ends*, his collection of short stories set in this very environment (some of which have been printed elsewhere previously), he is granted the opportunity to show us new sides to fan favourites, as well as whole new creations in familiar environments.

Some of these insights are satisfying: in 'Made A Monster', for instance, we are shown the full, horrific reality of what Logen Ninefingers used to be, making King Bethod's betrayal of him seem almost understandable. Then there's 'The Fool Jobs', a nicely comical tale involving a young Curnden Craw, and 'A Beautiful Bastard', which shows Sand dan Glotka in his early days as a dashing colonel before becoming a terrifying Inquisitor.

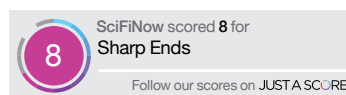
But it's the stories involving the lesser-known characters that impress the most. A series of odd-couple shorts involving fugitive thief Shevedieh and formidable warrior-woman Javre are arguably the highlight of the collection. The former's prematurely world-weary outlook and exasperation with her travelling companion and the latter's bemused and blasé antics are always

welcome, and makes you hope they will feature more in the future.

Other stories are less engaging – 'Hell' and 'Freedom' are both forgettable by comparison – but this is more a criticism of the medium rather than the writing itself. In any short-story collection the results will be hit and miss, but in this case Abercrombie skewers mostly towards the former, which is the main thing.

Moreover, it requires no prior knowledge of Abercrombie's bibliography, although needless to say it does help. When you've created something of appeal to both newcomers and fans, you can put it down as a job well done.

Steve Wright



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Inheritance & Other Stories
Robin Hobb/Megan Lindholm
Margaret Lindholm Ogden uses her aliases in this collection of both the Realm of the Elderlings and standalone works.

Author: Eliza Wass Publisher: Quercus Children's Books Price: £7.99 Released: Out now

IN THE DARK, IN THE WOODS

All teenagers question the things their parents have taught them, but for 17-year-old Castley Cresswell, challenging her father might be her only hope of living a normal life – or living, at all.

Castley and her five siblings live in an isolated house in the woods, where their father has kept them far away from the evils of the modern world. Unfortunately, some of the things their father considers evil include television, plumbing, and even medicine.

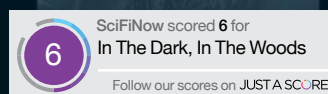
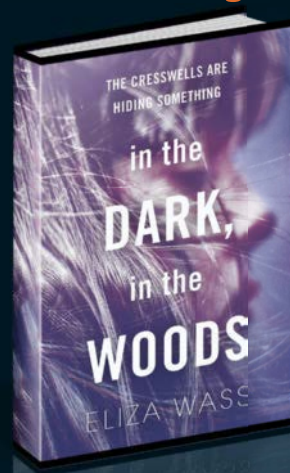
He's written his own book of revelations, and insists on the kids reading aloud from it every night. But after an intervention from a neighbour, the Cresswells are sent to school. And that's where the trouble begins.

In *The Dark, In The Woods* packs in a lot of ideas for such a short book. When we meet Castley and her brothers and

sisters, they're in the middle of a transition, trying to reconcile the lessons of their unusual upbringing with the things they've seen of the wider world. This means they tend to act in erratic and unpredictable ways, rebelling one moment but acquiescing to their dad's bizarre demands the next. From a psychological point of view, that probably makes sense, but it results in a slightly unsettling read.

It doesn't help that there are so many characters; some of Castley's brothers get to be developed further, but her sisters might as well not exist. Castley, though, is a compelling character, and it's impossible not to root for her as she struggles to figure out who she is, and what she believes. There's real horror here, and while the ending tries to wrap everything up neatly, it feels like the story is far from over.
Sarah Dobbs

The kids aren't alright



Devoted
Jennifer Mathieu
Rachel's a teenager who grew up in a deeply religious family, but wants to find her own truth.

YOUR READS

What you lot have been reading this month



"Just finished @RozKaveney's *Superheroes!: Capes and Crusaders in Comics & Films*, really interesting & loved Jessica Jones' chapter. #BookClub" @Cascararogue



"Just read *Ready Player One*. Really engaging and fun. Definitely going make a great film!" @kevmeany



"I've been reading the *Mistborn* books by Brandon Sanderson #bookclub" @Cotly



"Currently reading *HEX* by @Thomas_Novelist and *Blood Harvest* by @AuthorSJBolton and just finished *Insomnia* by @StephenKing" @IFLHorror



"Been rereading the @terryandrob *Discworld* series since his death. Just finished *Monstrous Regiment*. #BookClub" @ObsidianDev



"Re-reading *The Death Of Superman* comics, wonderful story!! #BookClub" @RockingRhys



"Just started *No Harm Can Come To A Good Man* by @jpsmythe. Only a couple of chapters in and very intrigued so far! #BookClub @ElliottFinn



"Re-reading *Dance With Dragons*! It's really worth reading again for all the missed details and hindsight... #BookClub" @thelilperson



"Re-reading *Cosmos* by Carl Sagan. Classic book, science a bit dated but blimey, what a story! Great read. #bookclub" @TheCrowAndGin



"Reading *Rat Queens*. A funny fantasy series that's giving *Game Of Thrones* a run for its money. #BookClub" @Jbarnes532

Tell us what you're reading on Twitter or Facebook



60 SECONDS WITH

Darren Shan



What can you tell us about *Zom-B Goddess*? Where do we find B Smith at the start of this final chapter in the series?

What I can say is that B is being held captive by a very powerful couple of foes at the start of *Zom-B Goddess*, and seems to be in a hopeless position.

All that would be worrying enough by itself, but the truly troubling aspect of B's situation is that if B falls, so will the remnants of humanity's survivors...

You have been working on the series since 2008. How does it feel to stand on the other side of it, having completed the tale?

Well, firstly it's nice to have made it to the end alive! It's an odd feeling, actually, because I finished my final edit of the book more than a year before its release, so I've already said goodbye to it once, and now here I am, saying farewell to it again. It's nice to have sent it out into the world, though I will need some more time away from it before it truly feels put to bed.

You've said previously that these books were a way to talk about the anti-immigration feeling in our culture. How have you found the reaction to that over the years?

It hasn't changed all that much, unfortunately. When I started *Zom-B*, it was in reaction to the bombings in America and London, and the rise of parties like the BNP.

Fast-forward a few years to the release of the final book, and it's against the backdrop of atrocities in Paris and Brussels, and the rise of Donald Trump in the States.

The hateful minorities of various groups are as active as they ever were, and the fearmongers are busy trying to capitalise on that and play to the worst in the masses and bring out the ugly, combative side of people in order to profit from the chaos.



Zom-B Goddess by Darren Shan is available to buy now, published by Simon & Schuster Children's UK.

Author: Adrian Selby Publisher: Orbit Price: £12.99 Released: Out now

SLAKEWOOD

Grimdark at it's grimmest

Some writers are incredibly gifted when it comes to creating tension, atmosphere and suspense. Adrian Selby can trump all of this, and as well as all of the above, he can make you feel grubby too.

It's not often that a book can have you running for the bath, but the sheer level of filth, sweat and shit that Selby's numerous characters endure is enough to put Anthea Turner in rehab for the rest of her days.

Bowel movements are not very often considered in literature – Harry Potter doesn't put his patronus on hold while he nips for a quick dump, and heaven forbid that Mr Darcy is late for a tea dance because he is a little constipated.

But as we all know in reality, bathroom breaks are essential, and Selby addresses the need to defecate frequently – and frankly. "My ass was stinging. I needed a shit." Needless to say this is a read that requires a strong stomach.

Or, at the very least, a love of brutally honest accounts of what it's like to really need to take a dump.

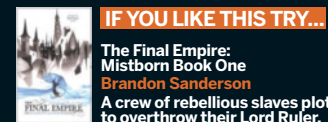
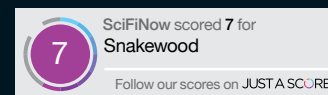
Toileting aside, *Snakewood* tells the tale of Kailen's Twenty, a long disbanded group of brutal mercenaries, reliant on the fightbrews of plants and herbs that taint their skin and gift them superhuman powers. Now way past their prime, they are being hunted down and assassinated one by one. What Kailen cannot quite work out is who, after all these retirement years, is coming after them and why.

Told from varying points of view in the form of letters, historic battle reports and accounts, as well as character narratives, this is not an easy book to get to grips with. In the same vein as *A Clockwork Orange*, each voice has a dialect of their own; it takes time and significant page flicking to decipher time frame, words and meanings, and let us not even get started on working out whether said word is a person, place or plant.



The fog does lift the deeper you get into the 410-page abyss of confusion, but it may be a little too late in the day for some.

Claire Nicholls



Details Author: Guy Gavriel Kay Publisher: New American Library Price: £19.99 Released: Out now

CHILDREN OF EARTH AND SKY

Final fantasy

It's tricky being a fantasy author. If you're not immediately accused of copying George RR Martin, you'll most probably be pigeonholed with that other RR bloke within minutes.

Indeed, Guy Gavriel Kay has previously drawn comparisons to both JRR and GRR, but those are not entirely

fair. While there is certainly more than a dash of Martin/War of the Roses-like political intrigue to his latest, *Children Of Earth And Sky*, as well as a hint of the 'unexplained' and magical, Kay is very much his own writer.

In this novel, his prose is direct and free of any lyrical pretence – much more than most fantasy writers, yet his world is decidedly fantastical, complete with book-opening map and all.

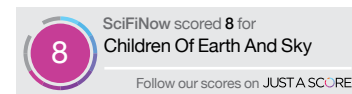
It doesn't take a lot of historical knowledge to quickly realise the book's setting is heavily inspired by Renaissance-era Eastern Europe and Middle-East. Vast empires, warring khalfis, travelling artists, wealthy city-states and Mediterranean trading ships cast such a thin veil over its derived influence that it's a real wonder why Kay didn't simply place his story and characters in the real thing.

Despite the slightly distracting familiarity of the setting, the story grips, and does so on the strength of the characters Kay crafts. In particular,

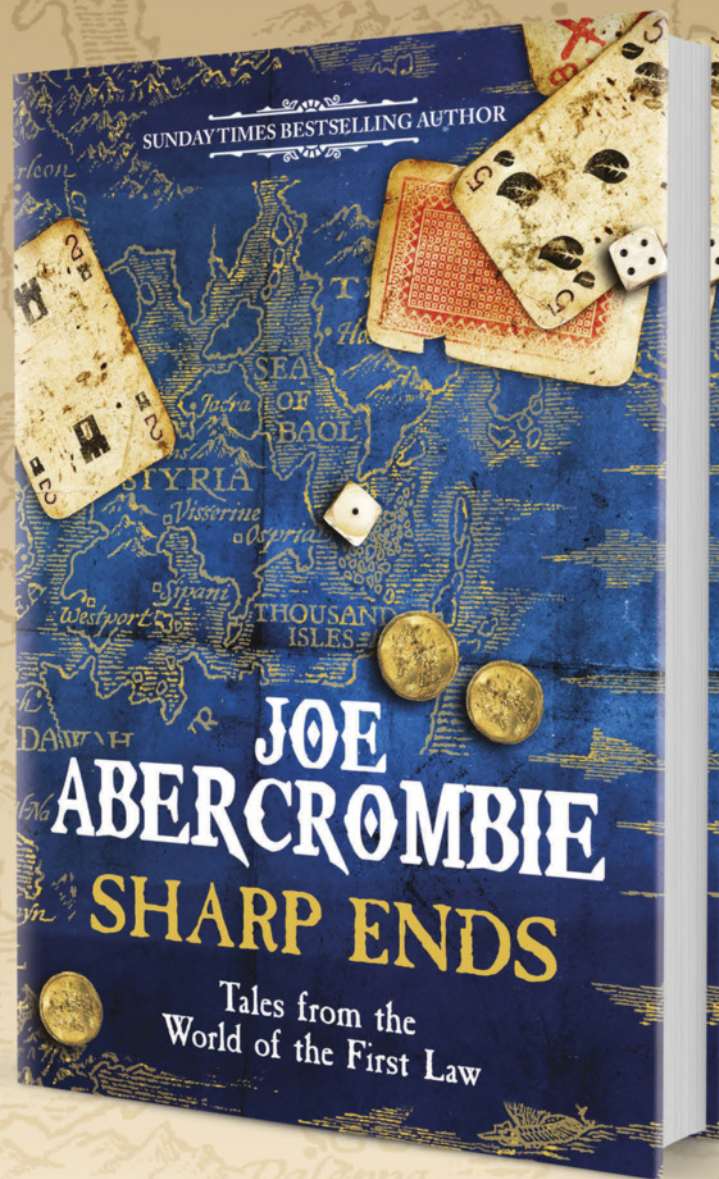
there's the young Danica, a skilled fighter avenging her family with a passion that would make Arya Stark and Liam Neeson proud, against the backdrop of the oppressive Ottoman – sorry, Osmanli – Empire. The narrative is brisk, the motivations are direct, and the world is rich and richly decorated, if a tad too directly borrowed.

Kay weaves her and the other engaging characters into a web of intrigue, war, romantic history and just a little speculative fantasy. It works as well not just in where he recalls the genre's giants, but in where he stands apart from them.

Erlingur Einarsson



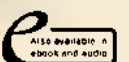
Spellbinding Tales of Violence, Hope, Murder and Revenge.

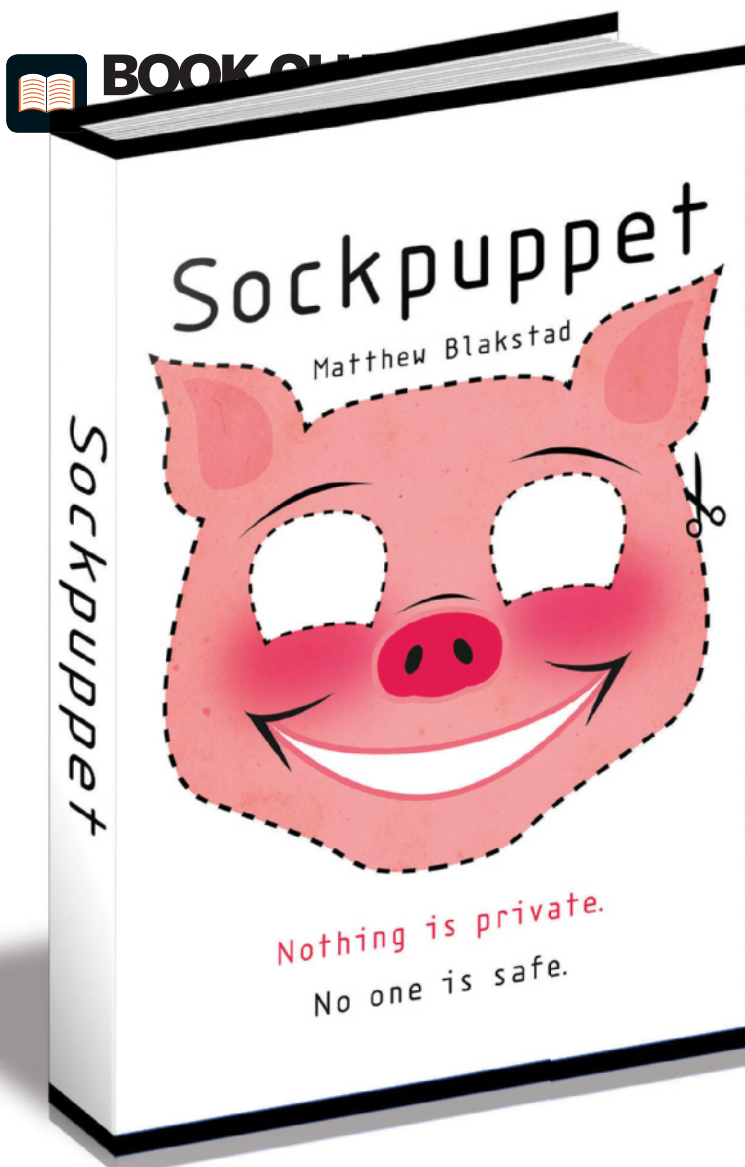


Sunday Times bestselling author Joe Abercrombie
returns to the *First Law* universe.



Out now where all good books are sold.





Author: Matthew Blakstad Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton Price: £8.99 Released: 19 May

SOCKPUPPET

Well-paced, intricately woven tale

The people of Britain are about to become Digital Citizens. The Minister of Information, Bethany Lehrer, is poised to launch a UK-wide online ID scheme that'll put the data of millions in the hands of a tech giant called Mondan.

But the group's data is hacked, and an account on Twitter-stand-in 'Parley' starts to post Lehrer and Mondan's secrets and lies online. But 'sic_girl' is supposed to be just an algorithm – where is she getting her info?

Sockpuppet's quite the genre-straddling piece of fiction: not quite futuristic or fantasy, and its themes about online harassment and shady corporate deals hit close to home, but it's not a traditional thriller either. It thrives on the tension between private, public and corporate interests, but just like the aggregated personas that populate Parley, the characters feel a little thin.

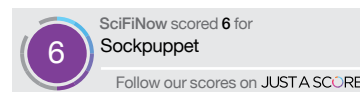
The story flits mainly between the embattled Minister and sic_girl's creator, coder Dani Farr. Blakstad drops social media blurbs into his prose, weaving his characters' thoughts into

this online world. It starts off gimmicky, but begins to feel authentic. Tonally, it's hard not to be reminded of darkly on-point dramas like *Black Mirror*.

Some elements come off as a little on the nose, and yet the author touches a raw nerve when he confronts the anxiety around information used to harass. These don't feel like such far removed fears anymore, so it's interesting to see a writer tackle them.

One of the most relatable themes of *Sockpuppet* is the idea of freedom off the grid, or slipping into anonymity. Blakstad seems to understand the nature of online life and the virtue of getting out of there when you need to.

Krystal Sim



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Circle
Dave Eggers

Mae Holland nabs a job at the most powerful tech giant, only to discover that privacy is a dirty word.

Author: Joe Hill Publisher: Gollancz Price: £20 Released: 7 June

THE FIREMAN

No smoke without fire

Joe Hill takes a step away from horror with this post-apocalyptic doorstop of a novel, but it's not so big a step that we forget who the author is. Although there are no serial killers, ghosts or Satanic gifts, this is classic Hill, and fans of his work will want to seek this out.

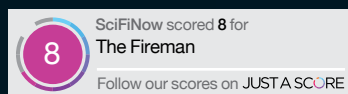
This end of the world comes courtesy of mass spontaneous combustion, as humankind is infected by Dragonscale. You smoke, then you explode. When nurse Harper Grayson discovers that she's not only infected, but also pregnant, she chooses to survive, escaping her abusive partner with help from dashing a English Fireman and arriving at Camp Wyndham. Here, the infected survive and thrive, but it never takes much for a tight-knit community to turn nasty.

Readers expecting something totally non-horror may be slightly taken aback by the shocking opening to the book, as a man gruesomely catches light in front of a school playground. Hill's not pulling any punches here, but the really

insidious creepiness comes from the oppressive forces pushing and pulling at our heroine. Harper moves from one suffocating environment to another as she escapes her increasingly threatening partner, but finds that something disconcerting is lurking in the background of Camp Wyndham.

It's a little overlong, but Harper is a deeply sympathetic protagonist, and Hill knows when to tighten the screws. There are very well-drawn characters, some serious shocks, a great sense of humour and a willingness to break hearts as well as raise pulse rates. It's another ambitious effort.

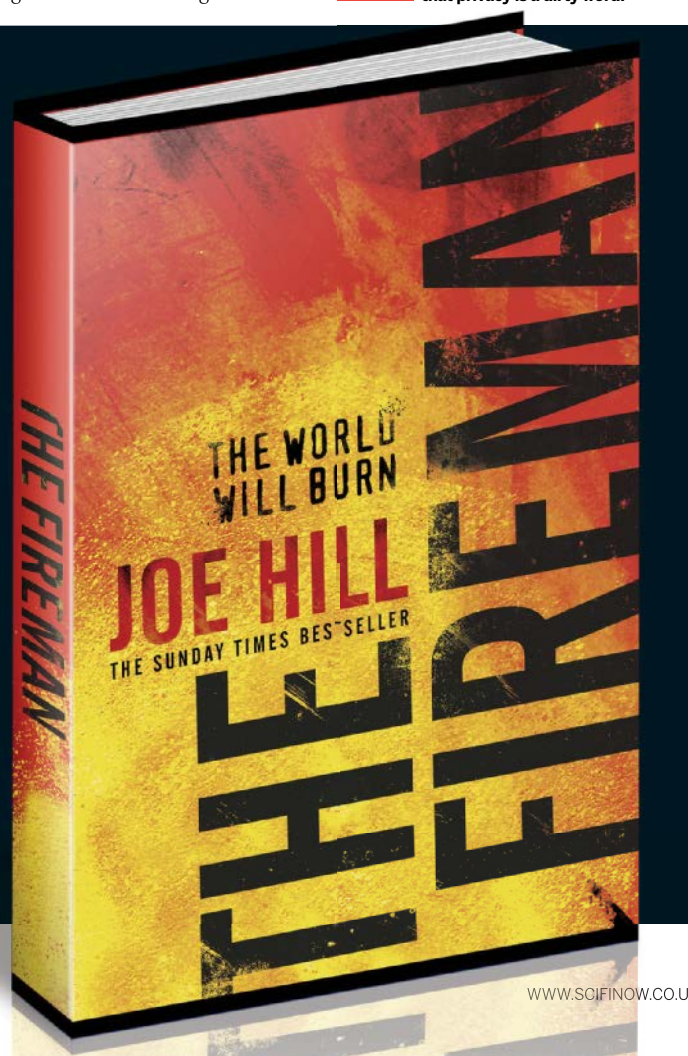
Jonathan Hatfull



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

The Girl With All the Gifts
M.R. Carey

A young girl with a gift is escorted through the end of the world by people who are scared of her.



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“SHE’S ALWAYS
ASKING HERSELF
WWJAD – WHAT
WOULD JULIE
ANDREWS DO?”

JOE HILL

PUTTING OUT FIRE WITH GASOLINE

Joe Hill talks to us about stepping away from horror and into the end of the world with his epic new novel, *The Fireman*

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Over the last decade, Joe Hill has established himself as one of the most exciting authors in horror. From his blistering debut *Heart-Shaped Box* to the savage *Horns* and the terrifying *NOS4R2*, he has consistently delivered beautiful and terrible nightmares – and that's not even getting into his comics.

For his latest novel, however, Hill has moved away from the horror genre. *The Fireman* is a post-apocalyptic thriller in which the human race starts to spontaneously combust. First you exhibit a dark scale that looks a bit like a bruise (named Dragonscale), then you start smoking, and finally you burst into flames.

At the heart of the novel is Harper Grayson, a nurse who discovers she's pregnant shortly after realising that she's infected, and becomes determined to do whatever it takes to save the life of her unborn child as the world explodes around her. When a dashing English fireman takes her to a friendly community of infected survivors, she thinks her problems might be over, but she couldn't be more wrong...

What do you think the appeal is in writing the end of the world?

The thing about the apocalypse – it happens to everyone. When you die, that will be the end of the world... for you. Whenever anyone writes about the planet teetering on the brink of destruction, what they're really exploring is what it means to confront the inevitability of your own extinction. When you're looking at your last hours, will you reach for some last happiness? Will you be bitter and lash out? A doomsday novel gives us a chance to see what people do when they're faced with the end... how they respond and who they become.

Was it a conscious choice to move away from horror?

There was definitely a conscious decision to at least abandon the supernatural in this book. *NOS4R2* and *Heart-Shaped Box* were both tales of the unnatural; *Horns* might be defined as magic realism.

With *The Fireman*, I wanted at least faintly plausible science. So while an incurable spore that kills people by spontaneous combustion is (probably) impossible, everything Dragonscale does has roots in actual mycology.

I've been afraid of dying of spontaneous combustion since I was 12. That seems like a pretty horrible way to go. The fantasy of your own chemistry suddenly turning against you and changing you into an organic explosive is sort of terribly fascinating.

Could you tell us about the creation of Harper? She goes from one very controlling environment to another, but she's incredibly strong.

I had more fun writing about Harper than any other character I've ever worked on. The hero of *NOS4R2* is a young woman named Vic McQueen – Vic is tough and fragile at the same time, angry and broken, a recovering drunk and an unapologetic badass. With Harper, I wanted to show a very different kind of strength and a very different kind of soul. Harper is tough too, but also witty, bookish and a little silly. She has a kind of unbreakable optimism and an unshakable sense of basic, almost old-fashioned decency. She probably sings too loud in the shower.

I love the Marvel movies, you know? Not since the Universal horror movies has there been such a big and satisfying franchise. But the films have suffered from their lack of representation. Black Widow is, like, the only girl in the whole thing, and she has to stand in for every woman everywhere. It's wearying.

One of the things I wanted to do in *The Fireman* was represent a broad range of female characters, placed in the context of a big action-filled SF type thing, like a Marvel film. So there's Harper, but there's also her best friend, Renée Gilmonton; there's Carol Storey, who assumes control of Camp Wyndham and emerges as Harper's foil; there's Allie Storey, who is sometimes Harper's friend, and sometimes Harper's bitter enemy. The book is named for the Fireman, John Rookwood... but Harper is not his love interest; he's *her* love interest. She's the driver of the action.

Was it a challenge to build up the tension in Camp Wyndham, and the escalation in violent oppression?

Yeah. That's why the book took three years. The people in Camp show her how to suppress her illness; they literally teach her how to live, and for a while things are happy. But then it all goes bad, and the emotional climate becomes toxic and scary. The trick was to introduce that broad cast of characters and familiarise the reader with the setting without letting the action slow down. You don't want things to become dull or expository. The story can't freeze in place. Things have to keep moving. You always want the reader to feel like the gas pedal is mashed to the floor, or close to it.

At the same time, the book most comes to life when Harper gets to Camp Wyndham. It's like when Harry Potter arrives at Hogwarts. You've brought your hero to a

JOE HILL
Putting Out Fire With Gasoline



The essential Joe Hill

Find out why he's a master of horror



Heart-Shaped Box (2007)
This deeply spooky debut tells the story of aging rocker Judas Coyne, who buys a dead man's suit and discovers that it's actually haunted. Can he figure out how to stop this ghoul, and why he's become its target?

Horns (2010)



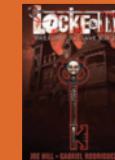
Everyone thinks that Ig Perrish killed his girlfriend, but when he wakes up with supernaturally powered horns that make people tell him their darkest secrets, he might just find out who did it, and raise a little hell in the process.

NOS4R2 (2013)



As a child, Vic McQueen survives an encounter with terrifying serial killer Charlie Manx. As an adult, she realises that Charlie's powers are far greater than she realised, and that her own supernatural abilities must be used to save her son.

Locke & Key (2008-13)



Hill and Gabriel Rodriguez's comic-book series is a beautiful and fiendishly imaginative story that starts with a grieving family returning to a family estate and uncovering a dangerous secret. Some spirit doors shouldn't be opened...

place where almost anything is possible, and wonder and terror are always just beyond the next door.

It wasn't so hard to imagine a like-minded community becoming tribal, violent and scary. That pretty much describes your average Donald Trump rally.

Was there a particular inspiration for the character of The Fireman? And how important was it to get the swearing right for an English character?

When we first meet Harper, she's a school nurse who secretly aspires to be Mary Poppins. She's always asking herself WWJAD (What Would Julie Andrews Do)? With that in mind, it became obvious that if Harper was a stand-in for Mary, then someone had to be her Burt. For me, Dick Van Dyke will always be the ultimate Englishman and his classic performance as a... what? What? Why are you looking at me like that?

As for the swearing, the English bring a combination of authority and imagination to obscenity that is really satisfying. For whatever reason, there's about 100 square miles of UK soil that has always been the crucible for the English language, going back 500 years now: a place where new words and phrases are forged and sharpened to a keen edge.



The Fireman will be released on 7 June, published by Gollancz.

From the makers of **SciFiNow**

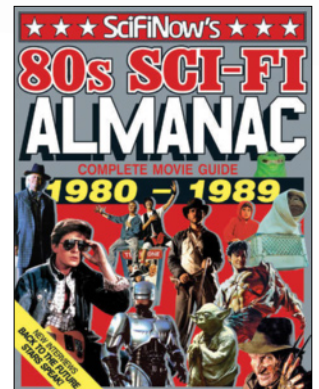


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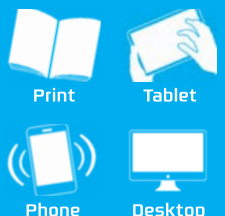
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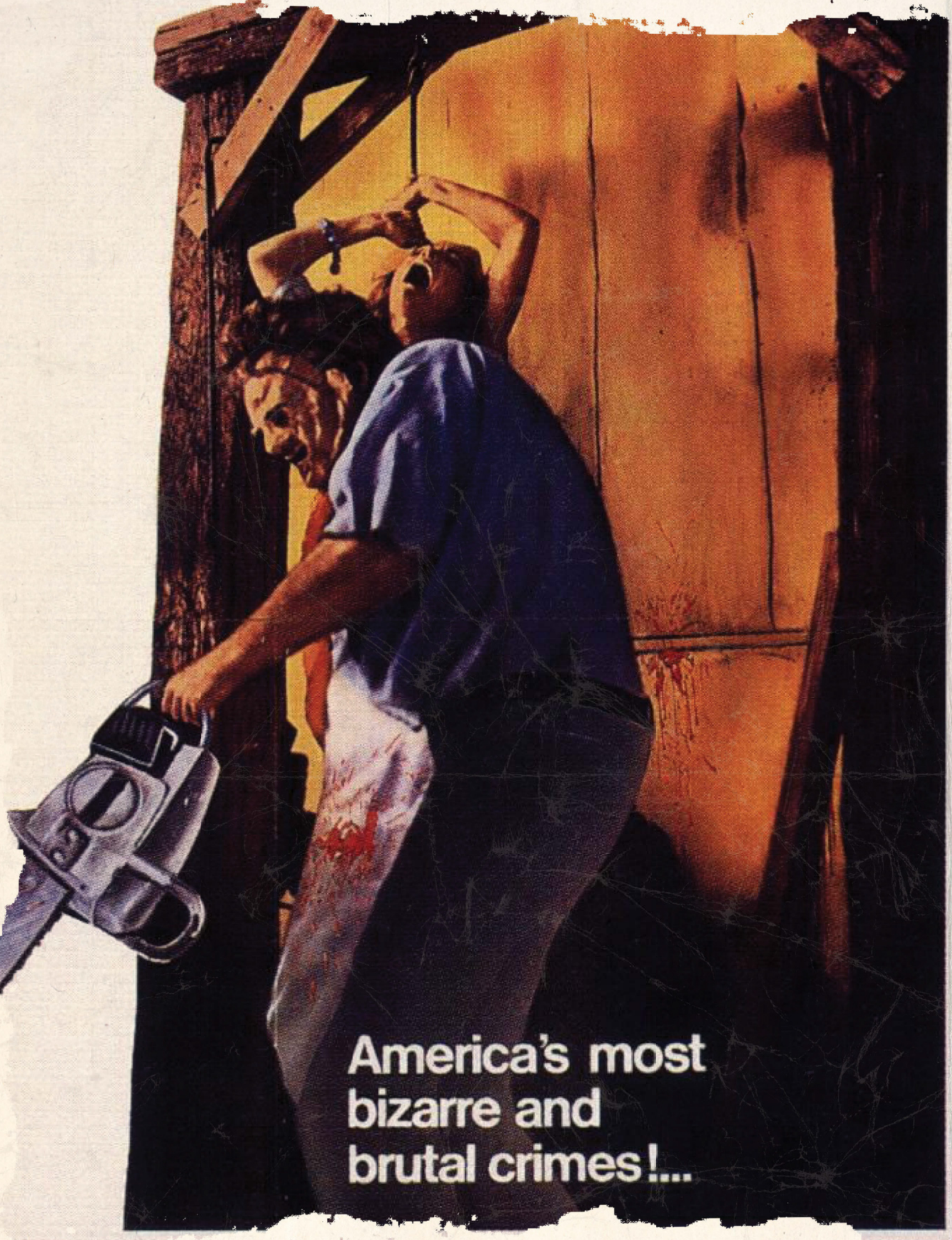
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WORDS CALUM WADDELL

You have to wonder if any of them had any idea of what they possessed when Tobe Hooper called 'cut' on the final day of shooting a small independent horror flick called *Headcheese*. All indications point to the fact that its creator didn't understand the impact of his little foray into flesh-filleting cinema. Unable to secure distribution from a major studio, Hooper opted to sign over the American theatrical rights for his new fear-flick to some seemingly good-humoured Italians called the Periano family.

Headed by Anthony Peraino and his son Louis 'Butchie' Peraino, and going under the moniker of Bryanston Distributing Company, they were able to showboat their success with at least one foreign import: Bruce Lee's groundbreaking martial arts epic *Way Of The Dragon* (1972). If they knew how to market a Hong Kong import, complete with dubious dubbing, imagine what they would do with a scantily funded power-tool thriller, renamed *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*.

Bryanston was actually a front for a highly successful porn movie operation that produced twin blockbusters *Deep Throat* (1972) and *The Devil In Miss Jones* (1973). In the days when X-rated films were a serious draw, the latter was one of the top ten highest grossing American movies of the year, while *Deep Throat* had become a phenomenon. Its legality was being pursued through the courts, leading to Peraino leaving the US. Shortly after *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* hit the number one spot in the US, its own distributor had taken the cash and ran for it.

"The money quickly disappeared into the pockets of various and sundry, and that was all down to the mob," states Kim Henkel, co-writer and co-producer of the film. "Had those profits somehow found their way back to me then it would, no doubt, have made my life easier, but I did not have that opportunity, and I guess I never thought about it too much.

"The big problem," he continues, "is that none of us took it very seriously – we were all really surprised when *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* became such a huge hit film. We were young hippy kids out in Texas, just making this little horror movie over the summer. Tobe and I had previously made an experimental thing called *Eggshells*, which was our first project, and that was inspired by psychedelics. *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was seen as the next step up, and it was really inspired by what I felt was a central part of our times. You had the Vietnam War, and what you see in the movie is a sort of moral schizophrenia."

Telling the story of five luckless teenagers who while visiting an old family house discover a dilapidated

**"WE WERE ALL
REALLY SURPRISED
WHEN IT BECAME
SUCH A HUGE
HIT FILM"**

KIM HENKEL

mansion that is sheltering a gang of four cannibals and grave-robbers, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is not only tense, well made and aesthetically quite avant-garde, but also influential. It inspired an entire franchise, spin-off merchandise related to its chief psycho-killer Leatherface (played by Gunnar Hansen) and numerous copycat films.

"For me, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* was an interesting experiment in manipulation," states Hooper. "We began the movie with this narration saying, 'Everything you are going to see in this movie really happened', and people believed that. For years they

would come up to me and ask, 'Was that movie true?' That is still, even to this day, the question I get asked most about my career. And then there was the title, and the consistent sound of humming throughout the movie, which seemed to really put people on edge. I think because of that, people thought that they saw things in that movie that were never even there. Maybe because they were looking away – I don't know, but we made them scared before the damn thing ever started

"The only blood in the film is on Marilyn Burns, the actress who played Sally. We poured a lot of blood over her head when she was getting hit by a sledgehammer at the end of the movie. Other than that, there is no blood in the film – it is remarkably restrained for something called *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*!"

Based on the crimes of Ed Gein, who also inspired Norman Bates in *Psycho* and had a fetish for dressing up in human skin, it might have been a surprise blockbuster, but it caused all kinds of problems for its cast, many of who were left destitute after believing that their own stake in the project would reap millions.

"Those mob guys – they laundered all the money through 14 or 15 different corporations," sighs Edwin Neal, who played The Hitchhiker, the terrifying brother of Leatherface, in the film. "So I was supposed to have two per cent of the profits, which should have made me millions. But then they tell you that you don't have two per cent of the actual film; you have two per cent of 50 per cent of 25 per cent of two per cent, or one per cent of what they have after this and that. Our lawyers could do very little though, because it was the mafia, and how do you sue these guys? They took the cash and they ran with it. However, it absolutely destroyed the relationship that the cast had with Tobe Hooper. We all got screwed, and I for one have never seen him since we finished the film."

Despite being banned in the UK, *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* fast became a byword for the 'splatter' ➤

"FOR THE AUDITION I RAN SCREAMING INTO TOBE'S OFFICE... I GOT HIRED"

CAROLINE WILLIAMS

➤ movie boom that was about to be ushered in by the likes of *Friday The 13th* (1980). As its legacy began to grow, and Hansen's Leatherface started to seem like the original screen bogeyman – before Michael Myers and Jason Voorhees took up their masks – rumours of a sequel began to gain ground. However, it was not until Hooper, fresh from the success of *Poltergeist*, signed a three-picture deal with Cannon Films – netting him a seven-figure salary – that *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* became a reality.

Now making 'chain saw' one word, this oddball follow-up sees Leatherface, his older brother Drayton Sawyer (the late Jim Siedow, the only returning cast member), the semi-comatose Grandpa and a new family member, Chop-Top (Bill Moseley) holed up in an abandoned amusement park. This time, the foursome are dedicated to producing award-winning chilli, although there are no prizes for guessing what the main ingredient is. Hot on their heels is an ex-state ranger (Dennis Hopper), who lost his brother to the cannibal clan in the original movie, and a radio DJ called Stretch (Caroline Williams), who becomes obsessed about investigating the recent murder of two college kids.

"I am in nearly every frame of that film," mentions Williams. "I remember for the audition I went to the end of the hallway and ran screaming into Tobe's office, pulled all the chairs from under him and piled them up in front of the door. I was shrieking my ass off, and I could see that he loved it. I got hired immediately."

Taking a U-turn from the exploitation film nastiness of its predecessor, *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* was not what fans expected. Awash with comedy moments, gruesome special effects (all played for satire) and even subverting the much-criticised idea of the slasher genre housing killers with surrogate penises (Leatherface literally uses his power tool as a phallus in one sequence), the sequel was a flop. Seen today though, you can appreciate how daring Hooper's frantically paced fright-farce actually is, even if Cannon – then experiencing severe financial problems – forced the director to complete his prized sequel under considerable duress.

"Cannon Films came to me and said, 'We have 1,200 cinemas we can put this in, but it has to be ready 12 weeks from now. Now go and make the sequel!'" laughs Hooper. "So Kit Carson, the writer... he took this little typewriter, and we had some idea of where it was going, but it was being written and rewritten on the set as we were filming. It was just crazy... I am amazed anyone could make a movie like that, but we did. We slid new pages under the doors of the cast. There was a lot of improvisation too."

Once again banned in the UK and heavily censored in the US – forcing the film to go to theatres 'unrated', which meant many cinemas would not book it – *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* benefits from Tom Savini's special effects and a lot of ballsy performances. Yet, after failing to stir up fan, critical or commercial



Texas Chain Saw Massacre is arguably more atmospheric thriller than slasher flick.



Despite its reputation, the film is surprisingly bloodless.

enthusiasm, the franchise looked like it would not be creating another buzz anytime soon.

Hooper, meanwhile, seemed to have finished Leatherface and crew forever – killing the entire family in an explosion at the end of the second movie. As such, when New Line Cinema (home of the *Nightmare On Elm Street* films) declared an interest in purchasing the property, people were curious about where the next Lone Star state shocker would go. Would it be a return to the tense suspense of the original? Or continue the excessive silliness of its follow-up?

"I was surprised to be hired, because I was still quite new to the industry at that time," begins Jeff Burr, director of *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*. "My first thoughts were that I wanted to move away from part two. I had seen the original a few times and I really loved it, but that is probably where I went wrong. My sequel is more like a remake and without an identity of its own. It is also too 'Hollywood' to really make an impact. We were kind of in the middle where it's slick, but not that slick, because it is still a low-budget movie. In the end we pleased no one."

Unfortunately for Burr, the censorious climate at the time in the US meant that this third instalment would be held up by the American ratings board for months (as with the other two *Chainsaw* movies, it was banned outright in the UK). Forced to shoot a new ending, fired and re-hired at different occasions, and attempting to ➤

CRAFTING A CLASSIC

Writer and producer Kim Henkel shares some memories of his immortal terror totem

How did you get involved with producing the remake and its prequel?

We had managed, somehow or another, to hang on to the rights for *Chain Saw*, and they had to come to us in order to do the movie. So we licensed the rights to them, and Tobe and I were given roles on both films – but we were really brought on as executive producers, and we had no control over what they did with the films.

Were you happy with the remake?

I am never happy with anything [laughs]. But yeah, I knew what to expect. It was fine.

When the sequels to the original *Texas Chain Saw Massacre* transpired, did they need to get your approval to make them?

They did not have to come to me specifically, but they did have to come to the owners, and I happen to be one of them. Other than that I had no involvement with these movies.

Is it not true that you pitched New Line an idea for part three?

I never pitched them an idea, but I did attempt to talk to them about what they were doing. However, New Line had no interest in what I had to say. I should add that I know that Jeff Burr, who directed that movie, had as many problems as anyone with that project, so that is not a comment on him. He had no say in the matter.

Can you go on record about the rumour that you guys were aiming for a PG rating, which is why there is so little on-screen blood?

I have never heard that rumour until you just mentioned it [laughs]. So to answer your question, no, we were never aiming for a PG rating. We all knew exactly what we were making [laughs].

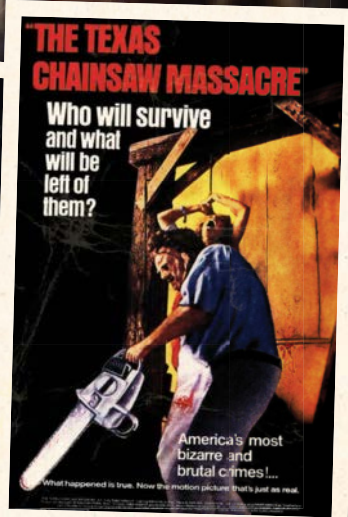
Did you come up with the famous "look at what your brother did to the door!" line?

Sure, that was me. I felt that was a central part of what was going on in the film, and it just emerged with that line. It is the key to how these characters function – on the one hand they can take pride in their house, and yet, in the background, there is a young woman that they are about to torture and kill.

Is it true that *The Next Generation* was held up from distribution because Renée Zellweger's agent thought it could harm her career?

We have never been able to nail that down, but let's just put it in a general way and say that there was resistance to it being released, which definitely came from the agents and management of some of the cast.





COMPLETE GUIDE TO THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE SERIES

➤ take his name off the final flick, Burr would suffer the final humiliation of seeing his *Chainsaw* picture die a quick box-office death.

Aside from boasting an early leading man turn from *Lord Of The Rings* star Viggo Mortensen, the confusing *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* is otherwise remembered for taking the franchise into *Friday The 13th* territory. A basic 'body count' movie, forgettable supporting characters are lined up merely to be killed in largely bloodless ways.

"It is ironic, because *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* is by far my most well-known movie," continues Burr. "I worked four months on it. I worked July, August, September and October of 1989. It was supposed to come out around Halloween 1989, and then it got delayed because the American censorship board, the MPAA, kept saying it was too violent, it was too graphic, it was too this and it was too that. It ended up coming out in January of 1990.

"From November until January, when it came out, was a weird limbo for me, a very strange period in my life just because I was blind-sided by this whole thing. I had never gone through something like this. I was 27 years old, and very naïve about the realities of the film business, and I didn't handle it particularly well, but it did make me figure out that I wanted to do independent movies, so in the Nineties, right up until now, that is what I have done. My heart and mind is with the independent movies that you can totally control, and that is all because of *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III*."

Burr's film, however, is practically a masterpiece in comparison to the Kim Henkel-directed *Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (also known as *Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Next Generation*).

This notorious stinker was produced in 1994, but not released for almost 18 months after shooting wrapped. The reason? Apparently because its two leads – Renée Zellweger and Matthew McConaughey – had gone on to superstardom. It is doubtless that anything could have saved Henkel's misfire though, which once again has *Leatherface* and Grandpa (now dead and represented by a corpse) joined by a

new family, although the narrative indicates that they are all space aliens. Yes, this is very, very bizarre – and utterly pointless too, concluding with Zellweger being released because the 'fun' is now over.

"I don't really like explaining what I have written," argues Henkel. "I mean, what is interesting to me about horror, is that you can get away with a lot

"IN HORROR YOU CAN GET AWAY WITH A LOT OF THINGS WHICH YOU CANNOT GET AWAY WITH IN OTHER GENRES"

KIM HENKEL

of things which you cannot get away with in other genres – you can go in very unconventional directions. My approach is generally influenced by the zeitgeist and the politics of the time. There is always a little bit of a modest proposal in every approach to horror that I undertake. So I kind of just want that film to speak for itself, and hopefully people can come to their own conclusions about it."

Audiences certainly did, and with the *Chainsaw* franchise now being sunk to video, the question was if *Leatherface* and his cannibal clan had any sort of bite left. The answer was 'yes', because almost a decade

Strangely, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* took a more comedic approach.



Ken Foree and Joe Unger in *Leatherface: The Texas Chainsaw Massacre III* – which also starred a young Viggo Mortensen.



10 FILMS THAT THE MASSACRE INSPIRED



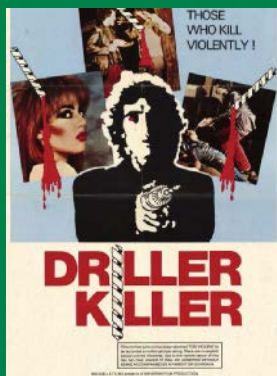
1. EATEN ALIVE (1976)

Hooper and Henkel's follow-up also casts the late Scream Queen Marilyn Burns in another tonsil-tormenting role. There is enough Gothic atmosphere in this torrid tale about a demented motel owner to make it worth your time.



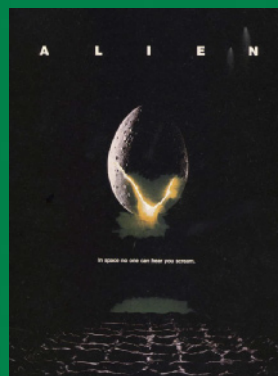
2. THE TOOLBOX MURDERS (1978)

A former video nasty that has a masked serial killer slaughter a few semi-nude women in a California apartment block, it begins as possibly the most shameful horror flick ever made, then veers into more psychological territory.



3. THE DRILLER KILLER (1979)

Abel Ferrara's grimy exploration of one man's psychological breakdown is best described as 'Polanski with a power tool'. Veering halfway between all-out exploitation and arty punk-rock aesthetics, the feature put its director on the map.



4. ALIEN (1979)

Ridley Scott has long mentioned that it was Hooper's knack for creating an unrelenting atmosphere that inspired his own 'haunted house' movie. Check out that final reel again – Ripley frantically trying to run to safety has Hooper's paw-print stamped all over it.



5. THE EVIL DEAD (1981)

When Bruce Campbell picks up his chainsaw in Sam Raimi's own video-nasty masterpiece, No points for guessing what he is paying homage to. It has made an endearing comeback in the recent revival TV series *Ash Vs Evil Dead*.

THE TEXAS CHAINSAW MASSACRE SERIES

COMPLETE GUIDE



Sadly, the 2003 remake didn't live up to expectations.

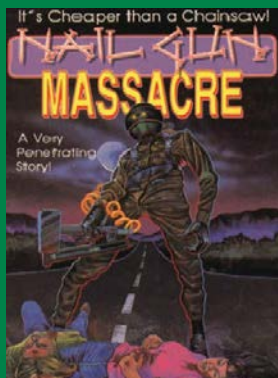


If you love Leatherface then you'll enjoy this list of genre fables...



6. SLUMBER PARTY MASSACRE (1982)

A driller-killer on the loose, it largely plays its boobs-and-blood narrative for laughs. It led to its own franchise, each boasting a different lady behind the camera and indicating that slasher cinema can be equal opportunity too.



7. NAIL GUN MASSACRE (1985)

Nail Gun Massacre also has its tongue placed largely in cheek. The story is simple: a madman is randomly turning local people into human pin cushions. Made with no money, the end result won itself an inevitable home video fan following.



8. SLEEPAWAY CAMP II (1988)

Before *Scream*, this strangely unassuming direct-to-video sequel opted to go postmodern, complete with its female stalker dressing as Leatherface. Such 'nods' to other horror film mythologies were a rare thing in the Eighties.



9. HOLLYWOOD CHAINSAW HOOKERS (1988)

Gunnar 'Leatherface' Hansen's comeback, it was obvious from the title alone where it was gaining its groundwork. The splatter satire ended up being heavily censored for its original UK home video release.

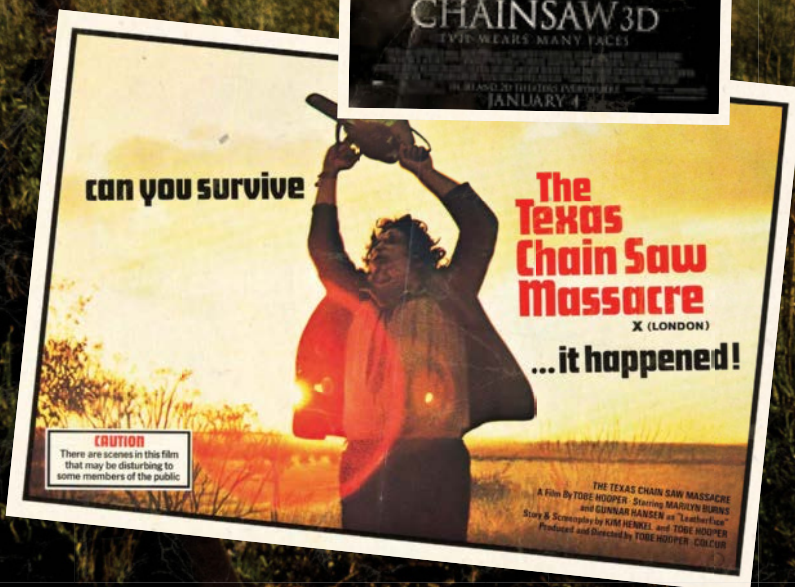


10. TOOLBOX MURDERS (2004)

If you can't beat them, join them. Tobe Hooper developed his own remake with this 2004 slasher, but ultimately his *Toolbox Murders* has far more in common with *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* than it does the 1978 original.

**"I DO FEEL THAT WE RETURNED
TO THE ATMOSPHERE OF
THE ORIGINAL"**

MARCUS NISPEL





THE HANDIWORK OF HOOPER

What the director did next

Tobe Hooper was always going to struggle to follow up *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*. Immediately beset by offers from Hollywood and romanced by critical esteem and a placement at the Cannes Film Festival, the young filmmaker was largely seen as an 'enfant terrible' who was destined for great things.

Unfortunately, with the bigger-budgeted *Eaten Alive* (1976), the hippy indie-movie master came a cropper of bad politics, and was fired before he could finish the film. Originally tagged to *The Dark* (1979) and *Venom* (1981), Hooper would be let go from both. A return to form, however, was just around the corner in the form of the excellent Stephen King adaptation *Salem's Lot* (1979) and the carefully crafted and atmospheric Universal horror *The Funhouse* (1981).

Proving he could work within the studio system, Steven Spielberg produced *Poltergeist* (1982) for the Texan, although controversy surfaced regarding who really called the shots on the ultra-slick supernatural spook-fest. Hooper's Cannon deal, meanwhile, was a commercial catastrophe: the mega-budgeted *Lifeorce* (1985), *Invaders From Mars* (1986) and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2* (1986) all bombed, even if each of them has now gained a loyal fan following and more favourable critical retrospection.

Sadly, the same cannot be said for later projects such as the badly paced *Spontaneous Combustion* (1990), the awful *Night Terrors* (1993) and the Robert Englund-fronted snoozer *The Mangler* (1995). By the time of *Crocodile* (2000), it looked as if a major talent was really in the skids, but *Toolbox Murders* (2004) showed that Hooper could still ratchet up a good scary set piece if given some degree of freedom and artistic license.

Frustratingly though, his zombie-comedy *Mortuary* (2006) set Hooper back once again – earning him some of the worst reviews he has received since *Crocodile*. Meanwhile, new movie *The Djinn*, which was shot in Dubai, though due for release in 2013 has yet to secure a UK release date.

➤ later, a Michael Bay-produced remake would prove to be a box-office blockbuster. Helmed by Marcus Nispel and starring Jessica Biel, this glossy revamp (which retained Hooper and Henkel as producers) was surprisingly effective, even if fans had the knives out when the announcement of a rehash first surfaced.

"When I did *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, I was asked why I was doing it, and I said, 'I am not remaking the Tobe Hooper picture; I am remaking *Hansel & Gretel*,'" mentions Nispel. "I do feel as if we returned to the atmosphere of the original. We used the same cinematographer, Daniel Pearl, and we did not set out to do a bloodbath. I mean, there is gore in there, but not a lot. I think we kept that movie relatively restrained and relied on suspense instead."

Basically *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre Part V*, Nispel's remake holds over Leatherface (no Grandpa this time), delivers some more back story about the character and cranks up the familiar feeling of abjection and desolation. Alas, by destroying the masked maniac during its ferocious finale (Leatherface loses an arm), the only way to go was backwards, resulting in the disappointing and largely forgotten about prequel *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre: The Beginning* (2006). Conservatively directed by Jonathan Liebesman, who notches up barely one iota of suspense, this was perhaps the most pointless entry in the franchise yet.

Alas, the worst was still to come with 2013's *Texas Chainsaw 3D*, an oddball attempt to make a 'direct' sequel to the 1974 film, only hamstrung by some of the worst continuity in movie history. Indeed, zipping from 1974 to the present day, but having its main characters age only 20 years in the process, it is baffling how this botch job ever got past the initial scripting stage. Horribly directed by John Luessenhop, who relies on such old tropes as 'have sex and die', *Texas Chainsaw 3D* reduces Leatherface to a jokey and

A return to the series is on the way. We wait with baited breath...



'tragic' figure. The worst news, though, is that Millennium Films is planning yet another spin on the slice-and-dice formula, with *Leatherface* (dubbed an 'origin story'), due out later this year from *ABCs Of Death 2* duo Julien Maury and Alexandre Bustillo.

Do we really need another prequel? Moreover, is the macabre spirit of 1974 possible to recreate when the people behind the latest gore-fests seem more interested in commercial returns than saying anything profound? It is worth remembering that having 'Texas' and 'Massacre' in the same sentence is political – making the last few disasters all the more depressing. Yet, much like Freddy or Jason, Leatherface, who is played more as a mysterious and downtrodden bastard stepchild in Hooper's innovative first outing, is now pop culture royalty. And in the money-making world of Hollywood, that means that the buzz of his iconic weapon of choice is probably never going to die down.



The Texas Chain Saw Massacre: 40th Anniversary Restoration Steelbook is out now, distributed by Second Sight.



INTERVIEW

HOOK SCREENWRITER JIM V HART

ON THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HOOK, WE SPOKE TO SCREENWRITER JIM V HART ABOUT HIS RECOLLECTIONS OF BREAKING THROUGH WITH HOOK AND THE HORROR AND SCI-FI VENTURES THAT FOLLOWED, NEVER LOSING SIGHT OF COMPELLING HUMAN DRAMA...

WORDS JAMES CLARKE

The work of screenwriter Jim V Hart represents a key contribution to modern American cinema's treatment of sci-fi fantasy and horror. In the Eighties, Hart wrote two spec screenplays, which he struggled to sell before finally having them realised as expansive, vividly imagined major studio movies in the early Nineties: the first was *Hook* (1991) and the second was *Bram Stoker's Dracula* (1992).

Hart subsequently became a go-to writer for major genre projects, notably *Contact* (1997) and *Muppet's Treasure Island* (1996). More recently, Hart has written the animated adventure movie *Epic*, which follows the adventures of Mary Katherine as she becomes immersed in a battle between the forces of good and evil deep within the forest. He also has developed a storymapping tool called 'The Hart Chart', which is aimed at helping aspiring scriptwriters develop their ideas, mapping the rise and fall of their characters and much more using his three decades of experience.

Hart, who quickly demonstrates what a generous conversationalist he is, begins our interview by explaining his youthful fascination with science fiction literature. As a boy, he read a lot of Robert A Heinlein and Andre Norton. "What I learned from Heinlein was that you could tell a very political and complicated story and dress it up in some kind of sci-fi or fantasy. You wouldn't be aware of a dogma or a point of view."

Hart cites three Heinlein novels as being particularly impressive on his young mind: *Citizen Of The Galaxy*, *Methuselah's Child* and *Have Spaceship, Will Travel*. "I started reading Heinlein when I was nine years old. It made it possible for me to see a way to effect social change through fantasy." He adds that his all-time favourite scribe was Kurt Vonnegut – the author of *Cat's Cradle* and *Slaughterhouse-Five* – who he describes as "my deity"; a writer who was able to, "write an anti-popular position and dress it up as entertainment."

It's this capacity to use something broadly fantastical in order to explore something very real that clearly

inspired the nascent screenwriter, who describes both Jules Verne and HG Wells as being "political animals". If you wanted proof that there's more to movies than what's there at first glance, Hart's commitment to the medium is ample evidence of this.

Hart was, and continues to be, a Texas-based screenwriter, and two of his speculatively written screenplays (*Hook* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula*) were eventually bought and developed by Sony Pictures/Columbia Pictures in the early Nineties. Hart worked on both screenplays in tandem, and he describes them as being, "Two new scripts that nobody wanted to develop."

Hart's determination would win out and, as he breaks it down, it becomes clear that the one project informed the other. The kid's film inspired the adult horror and vice versa.

Hook (1991)

Very much a star-laden movie, *Hook* was hugely anticipated from the moment that it was announced that Steven Spielberg would be helming the project in autumn 1990. The feature allowed Hart to make good on what he had recognised as the fantasy genre's capacity to offer a reality check in a fresh way. "I could write about a grown-up Peter Pan and deal with the issues of losing that spark and sense of adventure and mischief: how we all forget how to fly." He compares *Hook* to *It's A Wonderful Life*, noting that both are stories of redemption in which a feel-good outcome is arrived at, having put the hero through tests of mind, body and soul.

During its very secretive production – shot on the same soundstages as *The Wizard Of Oz* – *Hook* quickly became much talked about in terms of the scale of ➤

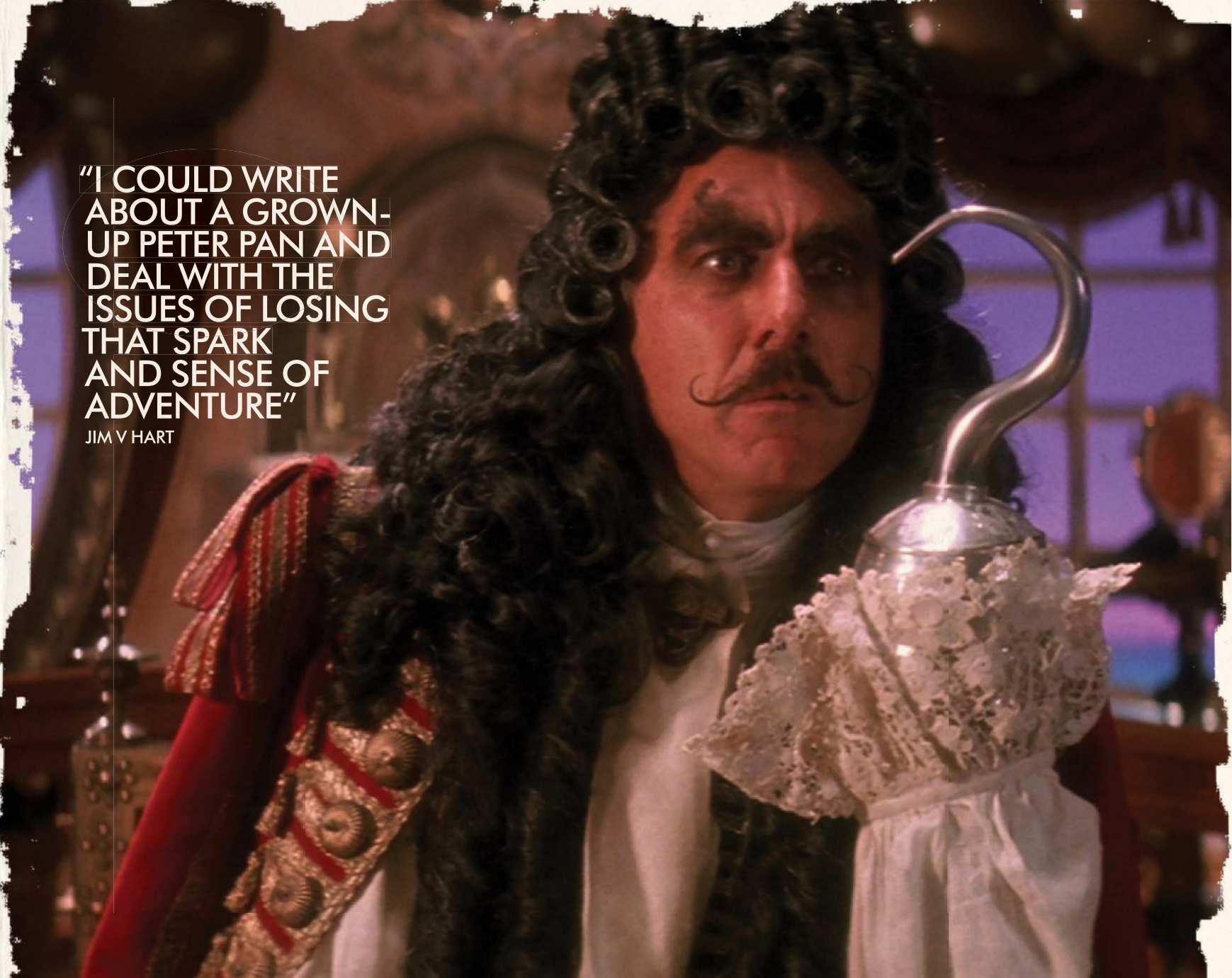


Robin Williams delighted audiences as a grown-up Peter Pan in *Hook*.

All images courtesy of Jim V Hart

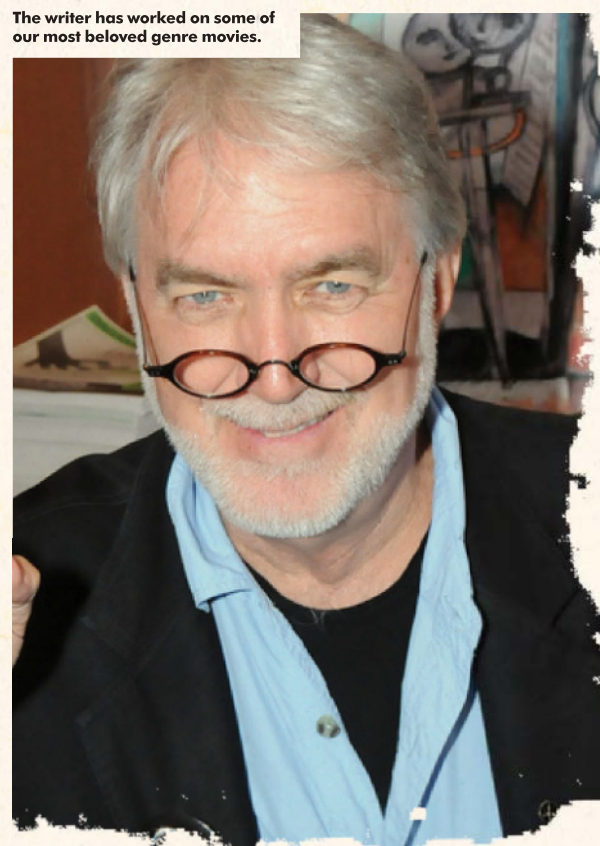
"I COULD WRITE
ABOUT A GROWN-
UP PETER PAN AND
DEAL WITH THE
ISSUES OF LOSING
THAT SPARK
AND SENSE OF
ADVENTURE"

JIM V HART



Jim V Hart was headhunted to work on the film adaptation of Carl Sagan's *Contact*.

The writer has worked on some of our most beloved genre movies.



➤ its production design (courtesy of Norman Garwood and John Napier) and its long-running production schedule. The film starred Dustin Hoffman and Bob Hoskins as Captain Hook and Smee respectively, with Robin Williams portraying a grown-up Peter Pan who has forgotten about his past. By venturing back into Neverland on a rescue mission, Peter is compelled to reconnect with his younger self in order to confront Captain Hook. “Hook was a very complicated film for Spielberg, Hoffman, Robin and Bob,” Hart recalls. “They’d all had a certain amount of success, and that struck a chord.”

In one way a splashy visual spectacle and in another a somewhat melancholy fantasy adventure, *Hook* was not quite the critical and commercial home run that had largely been expected. “It was a struggle to get the movie to work,” Hart remembers. “Steven was up against a release date. He never had enough time with the script. Robin and Bob were staggering in those roles. I know what’s in there. God bless Steven: I got to watch a master struggle to get what he wanted on screen.”

While not originally greeted with the kind of enthusiasm that was largely anticipated, the film has garnered a faithful fan-following responsive to its combination of busy spectacle with a number of quietly affecting scenes. Hart is clearly happy to report, “It’s had a gigantic afterlife. It’s more watched than *ET*. It has an afterlife that’s phenomenal.” Hart explains that *Hook* is screened regularly in Austin, Texas, and that Dante Basco, who portrays the character of Lost Boys leader, Rufio, in the film, has done much to maintain its legacy. Of the reason for the film’s ongoing appeal, Hart reflects that it’s because it “was a family story. It has a resonance. *Hook* continues to bear up to the power of the story. I think Steven will eventually appreciate the great work he did.”



Like Coppola, Hart was initially reluctant to tackle *Dracula*.



Julia Roberts in *Hook* as Tinkerbell.

Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1992)

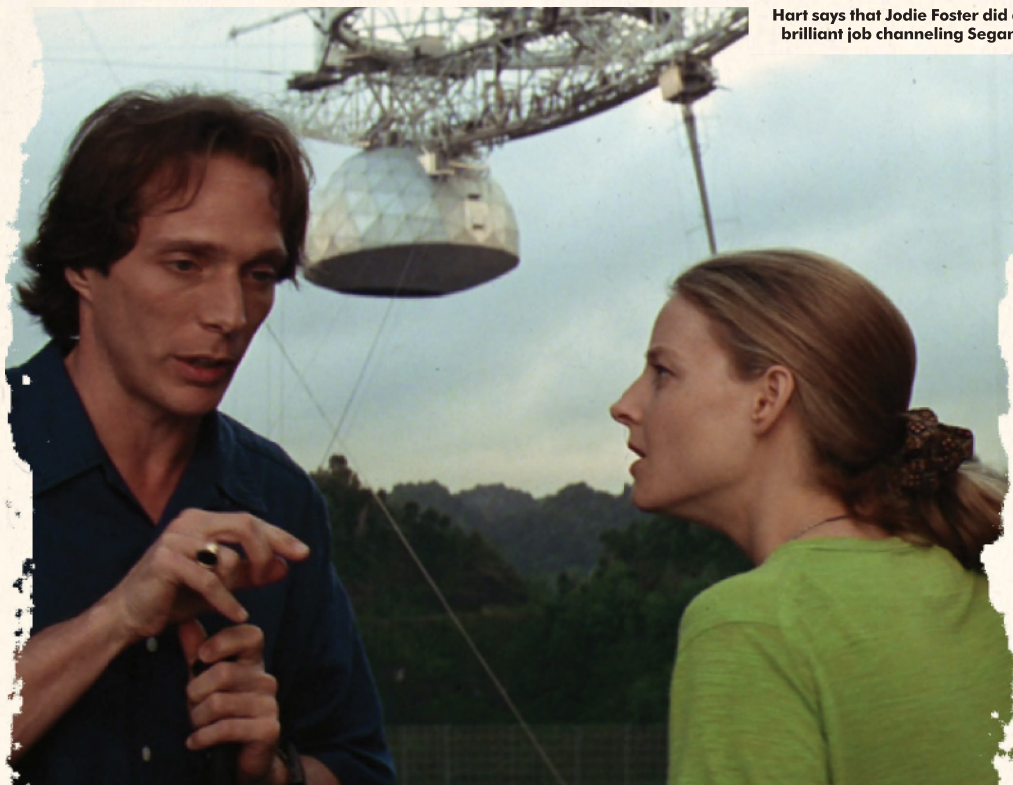
With *Hook* released in December 1991, Hart’s attention was already engrossed by work on the production of his screenplay, *Bram Stoker’s Dracula*. The inclusion of the novelist’s name in the title clued people into the screenplay’s fidelity to the oft-adapted source material.

While Spielberg was still very much a hit-making machine, the director of *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* was considered to have been in a creative slump; an inaccurate description when you look more closely at the evidence. Francis Ford Coppola had explored the cult of youth, a subject that has its place in the *Dracula* movie in his earlier films *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish*.

Critically too, Coppola’s earliest filmmaking had been in the horror genre for producer Roger Corman, and there’s always been something of the Gothic about *The Godfather* movies. Most importantly, Coppola’s cinema was characterised by a visual flamboyance that was a perfect fit for the realisation of Hart’s screenplay as a movie. “Kathleen Kennedy [producer on *Hook*, and now president of Lucasfilm and executive producer of *The Force Awakens*] used to kid me that *Dracula* was the dark side of me,” he recalls in amusement. By extension, Hart makes the point that the brooding *Bram Stoker’s Dracula* is the dark side of the playful *Hook*.

In looking back at his experience of seeing *Dracula* reach the screen, Hart emphasises, “Francis is a writer, and that’s what you have to remember working with him. I had a great master there.” With astonishment evident in his voice, Hart recalls: “The prep that he went through on *Dracula*, I’ve never seen it before or since. We did radio plays and made revisions. We did these massive storyboards. He called it ‘the score’. He shot video. We had a running film from the radio play through to the shoot, and he’d cut into it; the existing, living breathing thing. I learned from him: before you walk on the set, know what you want.”

Coppola’s movie was notable for its stunning lead performance by Gary Oldman, ably supported by other, equally huge genre stars like Anthony Hopkins as Van Helsing. Winona Ryder and Keanu Reeves also



Hart says that Jodie Foster did a brilliant job channeling Segan.

starred, and Hart's screenplay allowed a place for lesser-known character Quincey P Morris, portrayed by Billy Campbell, who had starred in Joe Johnston's *The Rocketeer* the year before. Like *Hook*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* was largely realised on soundstages, with the action playing out across very impressive sets designed by Tom Sanders, who recently worked as production designer on Guillermo del Toro's *Crimson Peak*.

In collaborating with two major American filmmakers, Hart offers what might seem a surprising anecdote when he recalls that Spielberg and Coppola had both explained to him that if they could get 50 per cent of what they envisioned for a film onto the screen then they considered that a creative success.

The commercial success of *Bram Stoker's Dracula* prompted a fashion for the Gothic horror movie once more in Hollywood, and a new adaptation of Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein* went into development with Kenneth Branagh directing and Robert De Niro starring as the Monster. "Francis didn't want to direct it," Hart recalls. "I didn't want to write it. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* still hasn't been done."

With *Hook* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* both registering on the blockbuster movie Richter Scale, Hart then found himself much in demand. He was soon engaged as a writer on an science fiction movie that had been in development for some time, and which anticipated the cerebral and sombre sci-fi of more recent movies like *Gravity*, *The Martian* and *Interstellar*.

The movie was *Contact*.

Contact (1997)

"I was literally chased on this project. I was a big Carl Sagan fan," Hart explains.

Sagan was an American astronomer who had been involved in the American space programme from its earliest moment. He had greatly enhanced the public understanding of astronomy with *Cosmos*, which became the best-selling science book in the English language. Sagan would then go on and write a novel entitled *Contact*. Of his initial reluctance to work on the film adaptation, Hart recalls, "I resisted it, and my agent kept saying, 'They're not going to give up.' There had been four or five writers on the project, and I found out that none of them had spoken to Carl Sagan at all. The book, I felt, was unadaptable."

In recalling his experience of working on the screenplay, Hart is keen to recognise the contribution of an unheralded screenwriter in the development of the project, "Menno Meyjes [who shares a writing credit on *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*] did not get credit, and should have done."

Hart relates how he insisted to the studio, "[Sagan] has to be part of the development process. For the next two and a half years, we spent time together. I interviewed him like a journalist: what did he want people to take away from it? We found the film story in his book." Of the eventual starring performance that Jodie Foster gave in the film, Hart comments, "Jodie did an amazing job of channelling Carl into existence."

Two directors were considered for *Contact* before its eventual choice, Robert Zemeckis, took on the project as his follow up to *Forrest Gump*. But Zemeckis wasn't the only director in the running to helm the film, as Hart tells us, "I would like to have seen the George Miller [director of the *Mad Max* franchise] version."

Miller's style differs vastly from Zemeckis's, so it would have greatly altered the end product, yet is something we are in agreement with; it would have been something to behold.

"*Contact* is still a rare and mighty film in the sci-fi genre," Hart declares, noting that in today's Hollywood feature film climate it wouldn't be made for the big screen, but more likely for the TV. "It was a very difficult film to find a place in the marketplace."

Proud of the film though he is, Hart notes that where the film departs significantly from his screenplay is in its treatment of the story's climax. Hart's screenplay had "much more of a declarative statement at the end: that this is true: that the galaxy was created by a higher intelligence. There was too much ambiguity at the end of the film. The end still bothers me. It wasn't the ending that Carl envisioned."

Our conversation duly comes back around to *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Hook*. Hart clearly takes pride in the ongoing popularity of his fantasy and his vampire movies: "The afterlife of both films has been extraordinary." Hart explains that his screenplays for both *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Hook*, "are both about eternal life and redemption and love. They just come from very different places."

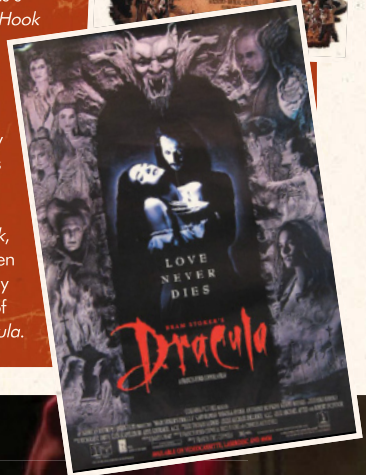
He continues to tell us that the recurring question that he has explored in his writing has been: "What the cost of growing up is: that's thematic in my work. What's the big deal about having to die? And what's the price? Peter had to give up a lot when he came back to his family. Dracula had to give up a lot to end his war with God."

LIFE BEYOND THE MOVIES HOW HART'S FILMS FOUND A SECOND LIFE

Both *Hook* and *Bram Stoker's Dracula* generated their own merchandising lines. Notably, both movies had a comic adaptation. Marvel Comics adapted *Hook*, and Dark Horse took on *Bram Stoker's Dracula*. For this they secured the talents of Mike Mignola to create a rather striking version of the film.

The scores for both films make for memorable listening: there's John Williams's delightful music for *Hook* and there's Wojciech Kilar's suitably brooding music for *Dracula*.

American fantasy novelist Terry Brooks adapted Hart's screenplay into a novelisation of *Hook*, and Fred Saberhagen turned his screenplay into a novelisation of *Bram Stoker's Dracula*.



"THE PREP THAT WENT INTO DRACULA WAS MASSIVE"

JIM V HART

FLASHBACK

SUPER MARIO BROS

ACCORDING TO ITS DIRECTOR, THE SUPER MARIO BROS MOVIE WAS AN ABSOLUTE NIGHTMARE. WE SPOKE TO ROCKY MORTON ABOUT TERRIBLE REWRITES, UNCOOPERATIVE ACTORS AND WHY HE'S ACTUALLY KIND OF PROUD OF IT...

WORDS POPPY-JAY PALMER



Back in 1993, videogames were still seen by many as something of an evil: they were corrupting the minds of children, ruining their educations and turning them into brainless zombies. As a result, there weren't a lot of videogame-inspired films around. So when it was announced that the Super Mario Bros were making it to the silver screen, it was kind of a big deal. But for directors Rocky Morton and Annabel Jankel, it quickly became a big deal for all the wrong reasons. Morton gave us some idea as to why...

How did Bob Hoskins and John Leguizamo end up getting cast as Mario and Luigi?

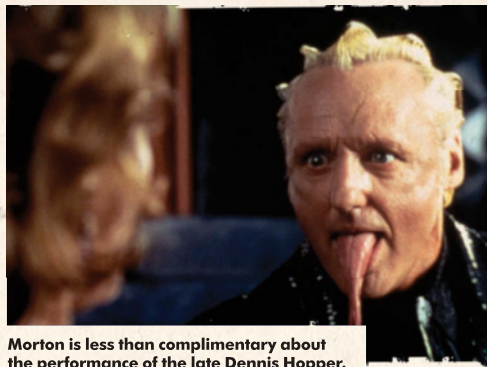
Well, Danny DeVito turned us down. Mario was the main character in the cast, and Bob was available. It was basically about availability. There are all these stories about the way people are cast, but it's normally about availability.

Then we saw lots of different Luigis, and John stood out because of his comic timing and his ability to be real, but also be funny at the same time. Bob had that ability too. We wanted it to have a reality to it, especially the relationship, and we wanted it to be funny, but not

just a series of gags. We didn't want it to be a broad comedy – although some of it clearly is a broad comedy – but the original script wasn't like the final script.

The original script was written by Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais [most famous for their work on *The Likely Lads*], and it was much more of a family film that appealed to adults as well as kids. It was more sophisticated, and the story of the two brothers was a lot stronger. But it was an independent film, and the producers needed more money and a studio behind them, and the studios rejected the script because they thought it was too dark. That threw them into complete panic, and instead of sticking with the script that Annabel and I wrote with Dick and Ian, they threw it out and told us to work with a new writer.

The new writer wrote it in about a week and a half, and then we were presented with the script. That was about a week before the start of principle photography. We were given a script that was completely different, and Annabel and I almost walked off the film at that point. The problem was that they'd build all the sets and created the prosthetics, and the cast was together and they'd found this great place to shoot it. We really thought we'd end up walking, but we decided to try to make the new script work as we were shooting.



Morton is less than complimentary about the performance of the late Dennis Hopper.

Did you end up changing a lot of things about the film?

We had to, yeah. One day we'd be on set and the actor would pick up the crystal, but it wouldn't work with the continuity. Someone would say, "You can't pick that crystal up because we're shooting out of sequence. If you look on page 24 the crystal is actually here." And we'd think, "Oh god yeah, it's a mistake!" So someone had to say to all the actors, "Okay, we're going to re-light the set, but it will take a while. Go back to the trailers while we relight the set." It was like that every day.

With everything that kept going wrong, was it a tough experience?

Tough? That's a very mild word. It was a harrowing experience. I mean, we had five units working every day... We had this enormous set that was built with not enough money to light it. I'd ask for a crane to put the camera on – you know, because we're making a movie – and there wasn't any money for a crane for a movie that size! [laughs] Stuff like that was happening all the time. It was hell.

Dennis Hopper, who played King Koopa, was notorious for being difficult to work with. Did you find that too?

Again, 'quite'. The word is 'extremely'. That was really, really hard. I don't think he had a clue what was going on. There was one particular incident: we had to shoot out of sequence because of the script changes, and we had to shoot on one of the sets that wasn't ready yet. I had to position Dennis in a certain way because if I shot off, I would be shooting off the set, so I had to change his position, and he said, "Rocky, that's a big change!" I said, "All I want you to do is instead of walking here, I want you to walk there," and because of the whole mess he just couldn't handle it. I said, "Yeah, but we're shooting off the set if you walk that way." It was stuff like that, on and on. It was mind-blowing.

Is it nice to see that the film is still being discussed today?

I'm proud of the achievement in the face of what Annabel and I had to go through to make that film. The thing that I'm most proud of is the originality of it, because that all came from our head. We created all those characters – I mean, obviously the characters were created for the videogame, but we brought all those to life and we created that world. So I'm proud of that, but it's a messy film. It's a big mess. You can't rewrite a script for a film that big and go into production in a week without it being a mess. But we did the best we could with what we had.

Then we tried to edit it together at the end to make more sense of the mess, and we were locked out of the edit room. We had to get the Directors' Guild of America to open the edit room for us. We were only in there for a week and then they locked it again, so there wasn't enough time really to pull it all together. Annabel and I were the only ones that knew the story inside out, and we were trying to edit it a certain way, but it wasn't possible. ☹



Super Mario Bros is available to buy on DVD and Blu-ray now.



IT'S THE GREATEST HORROR-COMEDY EVER MADE, NOT TO MENTION THE BEST WEREWOLF MOVIE, AND JOHN LANDIS' MASTERPIECE. WE TRAVEL BACK TO EAST PROCTOR AND THE SLAUGHTERED LAMB TO REVISIT AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON. STAY ON THE ROAD, KEEP CLEAR OF THE MOORS... BEWARE THE MOON, LADS

WORDS JONATHAN HATFULL

Time Warp
Retro
Classic
Film



Film

RUNNING TIME:

97 minutes

RELEASE DATE:

21 August 1981

DIRECTOR: John Landis

WRITER: John Landis

CAST: David Naughton,

Jenny Agutter, Griffin

Dunne, John Woodvine,

David Schofield, Brian

Glover, Lila Kaye

About

American tourists David Kessler (David Naughton) and Jack Goodman (Griffin Dunne) are hitchhiking across the Yorkshire moors when they're attacked by a wolf near a pub in East Proctor.

When David wakes up, he's told that Jack is dead and it was in fact an escaped lunatic who attacked them. However, David experiences vivid nightmares, resulting in the reappearance of Jack, who tells David that he is now a werewolf, and that unless he kills himself he will turn on the full moon and be responsible for terrible things. Is David losing his mind, or should he really beware the moon?

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON

Horror comedy is a tough thing to get right, and there are very few truly great examples of it. There's *Evil Dead II* and *Shaun Of The Dead*, but the only film to truly perfect the balance is John Landis' masterpiece: *An American Werewolf in London*.

It's hilarious, as you'd expect from the director of *The Blues Brothers* and *Animal House*, but it's properly scary and shockingly dark. Add some excellent performances, a brilliant soundtrack made up of songs with 'moon' in the title and Rick Baker's jaw-dropping practical creature effects, and you've

got a film that has been often imitated but never bettered.

Back in 1981, Landis leveraged his box-office clout to make the passion project he'd been told was either too scary or too funny. He'd come up with the idea while working as a production assistant on *Kelly's Heroes In Yugoslavia*, where he'd witnessed a gypsy burial ritual that revealed that local superstitions were alive and well.

He wrote the script in 1969, relocating the five-pointed star and terrified locals to the Yorkshire moors. The setting was in jeopardy due to the casting of non-British Equity actor Griffin Dunne,

leading to Landis threatening to make *An American Werewolf In Paris* until the union backed down. It's just as well, as the culture-clash horror-comedy has not aged a day.

It obviously helps that David (David Naughton, veteran of *Dr Pepper* adverts at the time) and Jack (Griffin Dunne) are so lovable. As they get off a truck full of 'lovely' sheep and head off across the moors, bickering about travel choices and Debbie Klein's body (there's nothing mediocre about it), they're hugely endearing and obviously doomed. Landis' glee in putting these two in danger is infectious, as Jack reasonably questions the logic of a sign with a gory wolf's head impaled on a pike for a pub called The Slaughtered Lamb, unaware of his role in what's to come.

The entire pub going silent upon their entry is imprinted so powerfully on our memories that we remember it whenever we pop into a pub that's a bit unfriendly, as none of the assembled British character actors (Brian Glover, David Schofield, Lila Kaye and Rick Mayall) are pleased to see the two outsiders asking about hot drinks.

When Jack makes the terrible mistake of asking about the pentagram on the wall and making the darts player miss, it's very clear that they should leave. "Stay on the road. Keep clear of the moors," intones the Darts Player (Schofield). "Beware the moon, lads," adds the Chess Player (Glover). ➤



Perhaps the sign outside the pub should have been a warning sign.

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON

RETRO CLASSIC



Genre favourite Jenny Agutter stars as Nurse Alex Price.

"THE CULTURE-CLASH HORROR-COMEDY HAS NOT AGED A DAY"



The film's early nightmare sequences never fail to terrify.

CLASSIC QUOTES

"A NAKED AMERICAN MAN STOLE MY BALLOONS"

LITTLE BOY

"STAY ON THE ROAD. KEEP CLEAR OF THE MOORS"

DART PLAYER

"BEWARE THE MOON, LADS"

CHESS PLAYER

"I WILL NOT BE THREATENED BY A WALKING MEAT LOAF!"

DAVID

"THE SUPERNATURAL, THE POWER OF DARKNESS – IT'S ALL TRUE. THE UNDEAD SURROUND ME. HAVE YOU EVER TALKED TO A CORPSE? IT'S BORING! I'M LONELY! KILL YOURSELF, DAVID, BEFORE YOU KILL OTHERS"

JACK

"I DIDN'T MEAN TO CALL YOU A MEAT LOAF, JACK!"

DAVID

"I DO LOOK MOST UNPLEASANT"

GERALD BRINGSLEY

"YOU MADE ME MISS"

DART PLAYER

"HURTING YOUR FEELINGS? HAS IT OCCURRED TO YOU THAT IT MIGHT BE UNSETTLING TO SEE YOU ARISE FROM THE GRAVE TO VISIT ME?"

DAVID

"THIS ISN'T MR GOODMAN'S IDEA. HE'S YOUR GOOD FRIEND. WHEREAS I AM A VICTIM OF YOUR CARNIVOROUS LUNAR ACTIVITIES"

GERALD BRINGSLEY

Jack and David promptly wander off the road, and it's here that Landis shows he's just as skilful with horror as he is with comedy. Their reaction to the approaching growling is a very relatable growing panic, going through calm rationalisation, humour and terror, and when the wolf attacks, Landis is unflinching.

Jack's chest is ripped open as he screams for help, while David flees, then returns to find his best friend's corpse. The beast lunges at him but is quickly shot by a pub dweller, who presumably had some moment of conscience. As David lies wounded, he turns and sees a dead naked man next to him.

In any other film this prologue would be the highlight, but Landis is nowhere near done. As David recovers in hospital under the care of Dr Hirsch (John Woodvine) and the friendly Nurse Alex (Jenny Agutter), his dreams hint at what's to come.

He runs through the woods, kills and eats a deer, and appears as a fanged demon, but his most upsetting nightmare is also the film's biggest shock. He's at home with his parents and young siblings when the doorbell rings. His father goes to answer it, and is met by terrifying monsters in Nazi uniforms that murder everyone and set fire to his home, all while holding a knife to his throat and forcing him to watch.

It's brutal, gory and loud, as the monsters shriek and David screams, and like a true nightmare, it reaches the point where you expect to wake up and keeps going. And then, because Landis is nothing if not gleeful, we get a classic fake-out, as Alex draws the curtain to show it was all just a dream – only to be brutally stabbed by a hiding monster. It's such a visceral moment of raw fear, one that puts the viewer right on edge for what happens next.

Which is the return of Jack. This is where Landis manages to balance horror and comedy – light and dark – absolutely perfectly. Jack's mangled face (truly incredible work by Baker) contrasts with Dunne's grin and cheery demeanour, which in turn is at odds with the message he's come to deliver.

Once Jack gets the pleasantries out of the way, he tells David what we already know: that he is a werewolf. He also reveals that until David dies, his victims are forced to walk the Earth in limbo. Dunne's performance is superb throughout, but the moment where he's tells his friend to kill himself before asking him not to cry is just incredible. "The supernatural, the power of darkness – it's all true," he moans. "The undead surround me. Have you ever talked to a corpse? It's boring! I'm lonely! Kill yourself, David, before you kill others." As David screams for Alex, he repeats that dreadful warning: "Beware the moon, David."

Then we're almost straight into a romantic comedy, as Alex decides to take David home with her. Complain about moving quickly and massive unprofessionalism all you want, but the two are delightful together, with Agutter bringing much-needed warmth and sense to David's increasingly ludicrous predicament. The consummation of their brief relationship (played over by Van Morrison's 'Moondance') is immediately followed by another visit from Jack, now green and even more grotesque, who repeats his warning.

Naturally, David doesn't listen, and we get the greatest werewolf transformation in history as a result. Landis' commitment to actually show it happening meant bright lights, no falling behind sofas and some of Baker's very best work. Flesh stretches, bones crack, hair sprouts and nails split. It's brutal, it's protracted, it's painful and it's fantastic. The film came out in the same year as Joe Dante's *The Howling*, which sported some truly wonderful effects by *The Thing* maestro Rob Bottin, but *American Werewolf* blows it out of the water.

The attacks are just as powerful as the transformation. You'd be hard pushed to name a film where the London Underground is used as beautifully as in the death of Gerald Bringsley (the brilliant Michael Carter), as the businessman races from the platform and through the winding corridors before finally meeting his end on the escalator. "I can assure you this isn't in



The make-up effects were so spectacular they still stand up today.



The transformation sequence remains Rick Baker's finest work.



Landis was insistent that none of the scene take place in the shadows.

FIVE BEST WEREWOLF FILMS

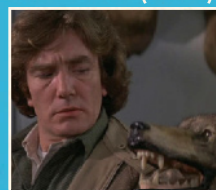
The best movies to howl at the Moon

THE HOWLING (1981)



1 Joe Dante's classic has Dee Wallace arriving at a communion that's full of werewolves, and features some prime Dick Miller.

WOLFEN (1981)



2 Albert Finney is a boozy detective investigating a series of animal attacks in this grim, stylish chiller with an excellent cast.

THE COMPANY OF WOLVES (1984)



3 Neil Jordan brings Angela Carter's fairy tales to life. Beware any man whose eyebrows meet in the middle.

"YOU'D BE
HARD PUSHED
TO NAME A
FILM WHERE
THE LONDON
UNDERGROUND
IS USED AS
BEAUTIFULLY"



the least bit amusing," he says when he first hears the beast's growls and heavy breathing. He's not quite right.

It's amusing and nightmarish, and quickly followed by one of the biggest laughs in the film, as a naked David escapes the wolf enclosure in London Zoo early the next morning thanks to a woman's fur coat and an unlucky child ("A naked American man stole my balloons!").

It's not long before David hears the news about the gruesome murders, and after attempting to get arrested and a heartbreaking call home to his little sister, he meets Jack at a porno theatre, along with his other victims. It's a brilliantly funny scene as David is presented with a series of suicide options from this gory gallery. Cheerful Harry and Linda suggest sleeping pills ("Not sure enough!" retorts Alf), while Bringsley tells him that he could throw himself in front of a train on the tube. Meanwhile, the comically terrible porno plays out in front of them, but it's all too late anyway, and some truly impressive carnage ensues at Piccadilly Circus.

There's no cure for what David has, and nobody is coming to rescue him. Even Alex, pleading with the



American Werewolf remains as terrifying as it is funny.

beast that she loves him, is unable to get through to the monster behind the man. Gunfire puts him down, and as Alex weeps over David's naked corpse, Landis savagely cuts to black and The Marcels' cover of 'Blue Moon' begins. It's a gut punch, a brutal one, and entirely in keeping with the rest of the film. The balancing act is over. Landis had no interest in a sequel, and that's understandable. How on earth are you supposed to top that?



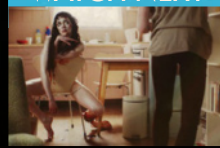
WATCH FIRST



THE WOLF MAN (1941)

The tale of Lawrence Talbot and his curse was a huge influence on Landis. It's one of the best monster movies.

WATCH NEXT



NINA FOREVER (2015)

This British horror romcom about an unfortunate love triangle owes a big debt to *American Werewolf*.

YOUR TAKE ON THE CLASSIC

WHAT YOU THOUGHT @SCIFINOW



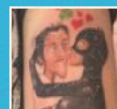
"Great film. One of the few to successfully balance horror and humour and that both worked equally well (and it had the Muppets!)"

@HarryPigg



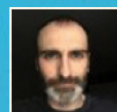
"It was the first horror movie I ever watched by myself. I was 10. It made quite an impact - I've loved horror ever since!"

@MsCrisis



"I thought it was brill, amazing groundbreaking fx. It's up there as a true classic. Certainly put Piccadilly Circus on the map"

@KingRichard76



"Watched it at a far too young age and I was terrified! Have never been scared of the horror genre since. It broke horror. Love it!"

@Neo55506



"It was the first real horror movie I watched and it scared me to death"

@philbooty

GINGER SNAPS (2000)



4 The werewolf adolescence metaphor gets a rare feminine spin in this brilliant Canadian modern classic about two sisters with a very big problem.

DOG SOLDIERS (2002)



5 Neil Marshall's debut is still an entertaining action movie today, as a team of squaddies meet a wolf pack in the Scottish wilderness.



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CONSULTANT, OR WOULD YOU GET KILLED IN THE SHOWER ON THE WAY?
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BACK TO THE BASICS

1. What is Marion Crane's occupation?
2. What is the name of Norman Bates' mother?
3. In which US state is the Bates Motel located?
4. What hobby does Norman tell Marion he is interested in?
5. Where does Norman dispose of Marion's body?

IT'S IN THE DETAILS

6. How much money does Marion steal from her employer?

7. What kind of car does Marion trade for a Ford Custom 300 at the car dealership?
8. What is the full name of Marion's boyfriend?
9. In which Arizona city does Marion work?
10. What is the name of Marion's boss?

MAMMA MIA!

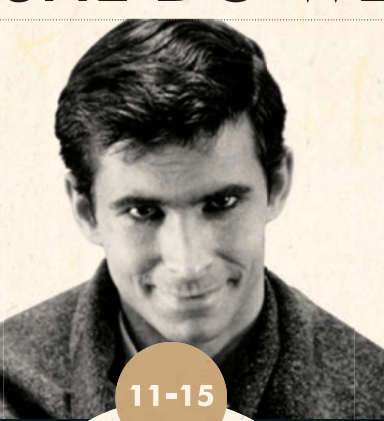
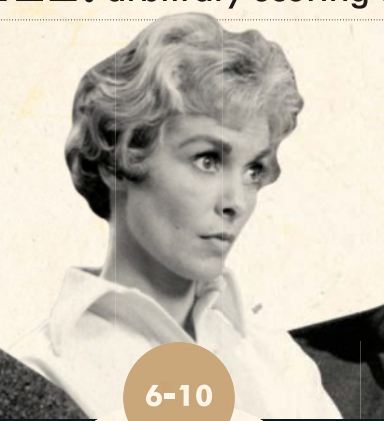
11. How is Mrs Bates believed to have died?
12. How long has Mrs Bates been dead for at the time of Marion's murder?
13. How many missing girls had Norman killed while posing as his mother prior to Marion?

14. What type of creature does Norman insist Mrs Bates wouldn't harm?
15. Who subdues Norman (as Mrs Bates) before he can kill Lila?

BEYOND THE SCREEN

16. In what year was the film originally released?
17. Where was *Psycho* filmed?
18. Who wrote *Psycho's* screenplay?
19. Which author wrote the original book?
20. How many Oscars was *Psycho* nominated for at the 33rd Academy Awards?

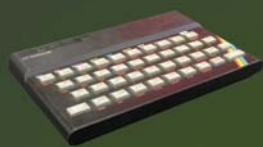
DIDN'T HE/SHE DO WELL! See how you did with our arbitrary scoring system

			
16-20	11-15	6-10	0-5
LILA CRANE You can sniff out trouble (and quiz answers) from a mile away. Your sister might be the heroine of the story, but she's also the victim. You're the true Final Girl. You win both at this quiz and at life.	NORMAN BATES The fact that you've kept up such a charade and stayed ahead of the game for this long is very impressive. It was only a matter of time until you got caught, but the mayhem was fun while it lasted.	MARION CRANE You stayed alert, vigilant and inquisitive right up until your early demise, but boy, what a demise it was. Even when you fail, you do it spectacularly. No one will ever forget that you were once a frontrunner.	DETECTIVE ARBOGAST All you wanted to do was help out (and perhaps score a nice bonus in the process), but your meddling only got you killed. At least your death served to help solve the mystery.

ANSWERS: 1. REAL ESTATE SECRETARY 2. NORMA 3. CALIFORNIA 4. TAXIDERMIST 5. IN A SWAMP NEAR THE MOTEL 6. \$40,000 7. A FORD MAINLINE 8. SAM Loomis 9. PHOENIX 10. MR LOWERY 11. IN A MURDER-SUICIDE WITH HER LOVER 12. TEN YEARS 13. TWO 14. A FLY 15. SAM 16. 1960 17. UNIVERSAL STUDIOS, HOLLYWOOD 18. JOSEPH STEFANO 19. ROBERT BLOCH 20. FOUR

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She only hears a familiar voice of a tormented man
who has haunted her dreams.

He tells her a story – of a time of souls and suffering,
of immortality and gods, of life and death.

This, he says, is Mesopotamia.



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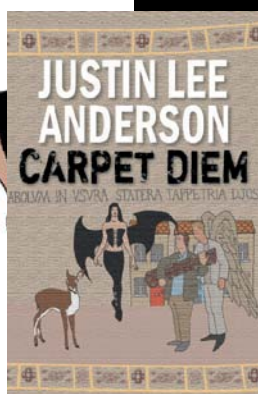
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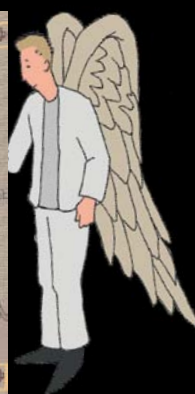
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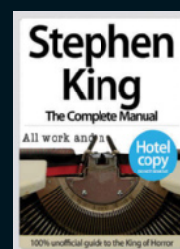
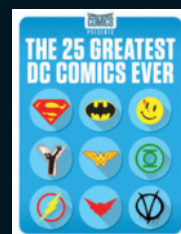
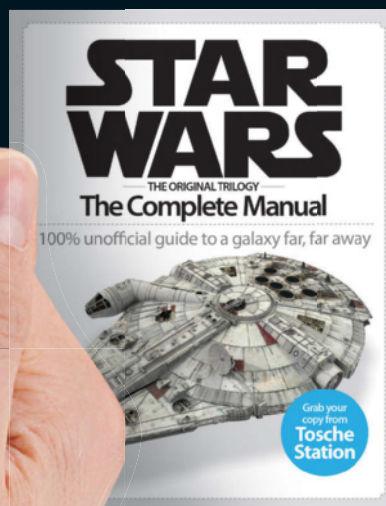
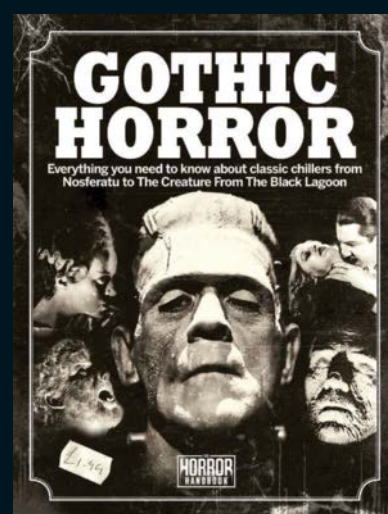


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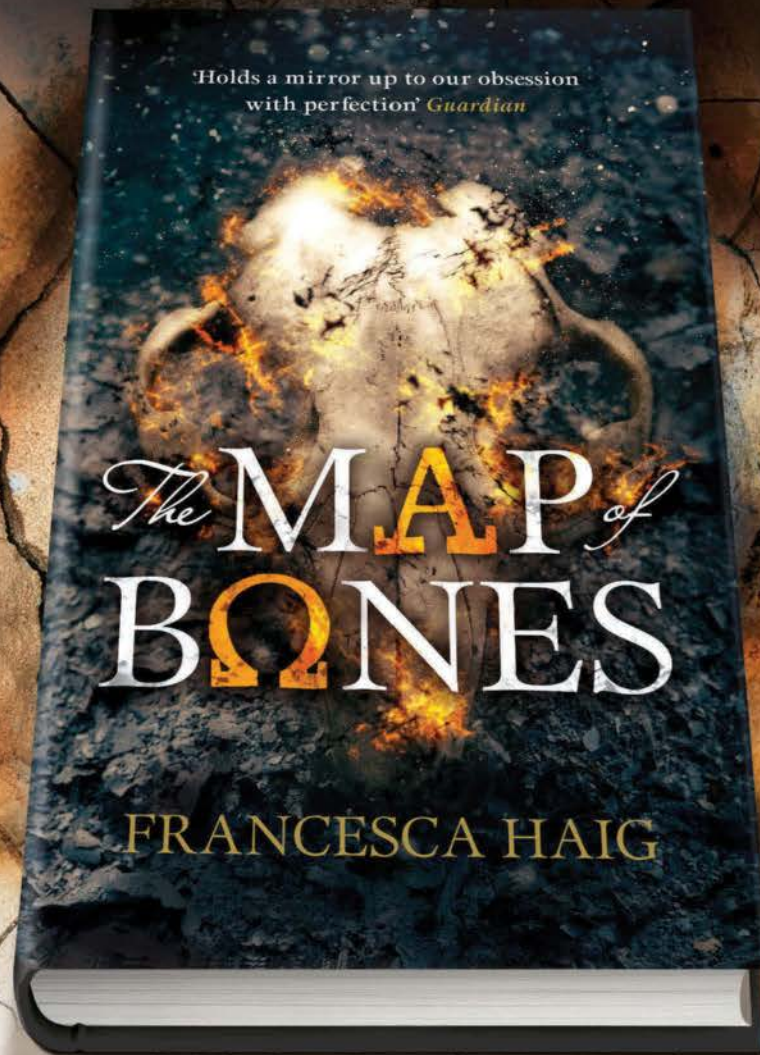
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